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Martin Luther College

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REPORT
OF THE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON
DOCTRINE AND CONCILIATION

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FOREWORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

For many years, going back to the administrations of President Behnken and President Harms, The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has been involved in doctrinal controversy. Charges and counter charges of doctrinal difference within the Synod have abounded. These matters came to a head and were the central focus of attention at the 1973 synodical convention. At this convention "A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles" was adopted by the Synod as a "more formal and comprehensive statement of belief" (1973 Resolution 3-01), and that which has been referred to as a "faculty majority position" was rejected. Following the 1973 convention, charges, including charges of false doctrine, were brought against the president of Concordia Seminary and he was suspended from office.

Because some confusion seemed to characterize the doctrinal discussions which have gone on for many years and most especially which followed in the wake of the New Orleans Convention, in January, 1974, after discussions with the Council of Presidents, the Board of Directors, and the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, I appointed the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation. To this committee were appointed 15 well-known and articulate theologians representing the diverse theological positions within the Synod and a journalistic consultant. Two tasks were assigned to this committee: 1) delineate the issues, and 2) develop proposals for dealing with the issues in such a way that the Synod can under God and by His grace achieve doctrinal consensus.

In December, 1975, I received the completed report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation. This report contains a number of documents which address the assignments given to the committee. In accordance with the recommendations of both the conservative and moderate caucuses that this report receive wide distribution within the Synod, I am pleased to be able to make the complete unedited report available to all pastors of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Moreover, additional copies are available from Concordia Publishing House at a nominal cost.

I also wish to state that I have given serious consideration to all of the proposals for dealing with the issues as they are contained in Section II of this report. Therefore, I am forwarding this report to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for study and evaluation, with the request that the CTCR give every consideration to the more specific proposals for dealing with the issues which were suggested by the moderate and conservative caucuses as it coordinates the preparation of a series of Bible studies and carries out its responsibilities for ongoing theological education as called for in 1975 Resolution 3-01 "To Seek Unity."

I want especially to thank all of the members of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation for the enormous amount of time and effort which was devoted to this important assignment. I hope that this report

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will receive wide study and discussion in the Synod, especially on the circuit, regional and pastoral conference levels. Responses and reactions should be sent to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

It is my prayer that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit this report will provide an opportunity for fraternal discussion of the doctrinal issues troubling our church and that it may promote peace and concord in our Synod under the Holy Scriptures so that we may all "with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15:6)

J. A. O. Preus, President
February, 1976

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P R E F A C E

In January, 1974, the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation began its work under a mandate from the President's office to (1) "delineate the issues" which are disturbing the peace and harmony of our Church; and (2) "develop proposals for dealing with the issues in such a way that the Synod can under God and by His grace achieve doctrinal consensus." To carry out this assignment, 15 men were appointed---seven recognized, articulate and dedicated Lutheran scholars and churchmen who were representative of a "conservative" theological approach; and seven equally known and articulate and dedicated representatives of what is commonly termed among us as a "moderate" theological approach; and one to serve as the chairman-moderator. Four of the original appointees declined to serve and others were assigned in their places.

The members of the Conservative Caucus were:

Doctor Karl L. Barth
The Reverend Wm. T. Eggers
Doctor Arthur F. Graudin
Doctor H. Armin Moellering

Doctor Robert D. Preus
Doctor Don Ridgeway
Doctor Lorenz Wunderlich

Serving on the Moderate Caucus were:

Doctor James J. Childs, Jr.
Mr. Walter A. Christopher
Doctor Carl A. Gaertner
Doctor Lloyd H. Goetz

Doctor Ralph W. Klein
Doctor Richard A. Lischer
The Reverend Samuel J. Roth

Narrowly defined, the committee's first assignment was to isolate in terms understandable and acceptable to all who were engaged in theological controversy those points of disagreement which are most disturbing to the peace and unity of the Church, to set forth the points at issue and to delineate those areas in which there is agreement and in which there is disagreement. Furthermore, this delineation was to be made in terms which are comprehensible to everyone in the Church. Initially four, and ultimately five, areas of theological concern were isolated as requiring attention. They are:

- 1) "The inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture";
- 2) "The Gospel and its relationship to the authority of Scripture";
- 3) "The use of the Historical-Critical method in the interpretation of Scripture";
- 4) "The third use of the law"; and
- 5) "The doctrine of the Church"; how broad is its theological umbrella and what do its members owe one another, particularly with reference to its moments of disagreement. (The committee

was unable to give adequate time or attention to this fifth area to provide a helpful report. Its concern for the topic, however, did find its way into the agenda at the Theological Convocation---Spring, 1975.)

That catalog has never been regarded by the committee members as exhaustive; rather it is regarded to express the most troublesome areas of contention among us in the Church. Nor did the committee discover the same intensity of feeling or the same degree of divergency of opinion or the same rigidity of position in all the areas. For a whole series of meetings sub-committee study and plenary discussion was conducted with representatives of both "conservative" and "moderate" points of view participating. This was a productive period of activity for the committee.

A second phase of activity, marked by a different procedure, was begun when the press of schedule precluded the plenary and the "mixed discussion" pattern. This procedure instituted the "caucus" approach. The "conservative" members of the committee met in caucus and the "moderate" members of the committee met in caucus. The purpose was to hurry the process of identifying the variant views under the titles of the categories listed.

One of the disappointments experienced by the committee is that it did not arrive at a point where either caucus could express the other's point of view to the complete satisfaction of the other caucus. The failure to reach this goal can be accounted for, at least in part, because the press of the schedule did not allow for the patient and even repetitious process which such accomplishment requires. There was indication, however, in some of the committee process that the goal should not be regarded automatically out of reach.

In the end what the committee presents is the product of a procedure which calls for a statement of position on each of the four selected issues by each caucus and for a response paper to each of these by the other caucus. The bulk product of the committee work is this series of papers. It is the prayer of the committee that these papers will help the Church address its concerns and the members of the Church to talk intelligently, reasonably and helpfully with one another about those concerns.

The members of the committee believe in the Church, the Holy Christian Church. The members of the committee are committed to make The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod an effective and positive unit in the Holy Christian Church. In this spirit the members of the committee have given of themselves and of their time not only generously but gladly and have matched the moments of their labor with as many moments and more in earnest prayer to that crucified and risen Lord whose Church we are for our Church's health. The committee would like to thank the Reverend Samuel Nafzger for serving it so faithfully and diligently as staff man and the Reverend Frank Starr for his assistance in interpreting the committee's work to the Church and in helping the committee to produce a product which is comprehensible to its members.

Arnold G. Kuntz, Chairman
November 28, 1975

SECTION I - POSITION PAPERS AND RESPONSES*

PART A - INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY

ITEM 1 - MODERATE POSITION PAPER

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the chief elements of the current crisis in our synod is the controversy which has arisen over the doctrine of Scripture. The several facets of this controversy are treated under the headings of Inspiration and Inerrancy, Gospel and Scripture, and the use of the Historical Critical Method. Because these three issues are very closely interconnected, the reader is alerted to the need for a careful reading and comparison of all the documents found under these headings. In this fashion one can receive the most comprehensive picture possible of the positions being represented on the Scripture issue. Here we deal specifically with the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.

II. THE ISSUE IN BRIEF

Both parties to the current dispute are agreed that the Scripture is the inspired Word of God. The real debate surrounds the concept of inerrancy. All affirm the truthfulness and reliability of Scripture as something which the Scripture claims for itself and something which is a corollary of its inspired character. The importance of this fundamental agreement should not be underestimated. The point at issue is: What does the Scripture itself enable us to say about its truthfulness and reliability? In what sense, if any, is "inerrancy" a suitable and helpful term for expressing that truthfulness? Indeed, can we even define inerrancy in a way that can be consistently and meaningfully applied to all parts of Scripture? These questions identify the technical, theological point of controversy.

However, more is at stake than just a technical point of theology. If a definition of inerrancy which stresses the flawless character of factual precision of all parts of the Bible is raised to the level of a doctrine and considered necessary for maintaining the authority of Scripture and the truth of the Gospel, then serious problems arise.

*See Appendix 1 for Explanation of Conservative Format and Appendix 2 for Moderate Caucus Evaluation of the Report of the ACDC [pp. 142-147]

First of all such a claim for inerrancy goes beyond what the Scripture claims for itself. Therefore, to insist upon it as doctrine is to bind consciences to human opinion. More importantly, to rest the authority of Scripture on such a version of inerrancy detracts from Scripture's real authority. All authority is from God; Scripture is authoritative simply because it is God's Word. Through that Word of Law and Gospel, the Spirit works to create and sustain faith in Christ. In this faith we recognize Scripture as the Word of God and its truth as the sole authority for our doctrine and life.

This faith does not require that we buttress or guard the authority and truthfulness of the Scripture with rationalizations concerning the errorless character of its text. In faith we trust that God uses various forms of human utterance, even those which appear to have contradictions or deficiencies, to convey to us His divine truth.

Rather than impose our own definition of "inerrancy" on the sacred text, we let the Bible itself define its inerrancy. We believe that "God will not deceive us," and we do not dictate to Him how He must give us His truth. Rather, we accept the Scriptures as they are and define the terms "truthful" and "reliable" according to the Scripture's own testimony.

In other words Scripture alone can give evidence of the manner in which it pleased the Holy Spirit to use human authors, in all their individuality and limitations and literary forms, in all their rich variety, to speak the Word of God to humankind. We must employ the principle of sola Scriptura also in formulating our doctrine of Holy Scripture itself.

This capsule summary of our views on this issue is now further explained by the theses and discussion which follows.

III. THESES AND DISCUSSION ON INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY

A. Inspiration

1. The Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and therefore the only norm of doctrine and practice. That is, the Scriptures possess what we call normative authority. (SA, II, ii, 15; FCSD, Rule and Norm, FC, Ep., Rule and Norm, FCSD, II, 8)

2. In saying that we regard the Scriptures as "God-breathed" or inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), we are saying that God is their principal or primary author (2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Thess. 2:13).

3. God's initiative and authorship in giving the Scriptures is only understandable in view of His purpose for the Scripture. Therefore, inspiration also pertains to Scripture's causative authority, which refers to its power in Law and Gospel to lead people to saving faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus we consider inspiration as an integral part of the saving work of the Holy Spirit as Scripture itself does in

proclaiming its own purpose: "the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15; see also, Rom. 1:16; 10:17; 15:4; John 20:31) This purpose, which includes teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness, is linked to the Spirit's work of inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16) and places that work in the context of God's saving activity in history. (The saving purpose and power of the Word through the work of the Spirit is amply attested in the Confessions: Ap. IV, 67; LC, Preface, II; LC, Pt. I, 91-92, 102; LC, Pt. II, 38; FCSD, II, 50, 52, XI, 44. The CTCR's "A Study Document on Revelation, Inspiration, and Inerrancy" rightly stresses the connection between the saving power and purpose of the Spirit and His work of inspiration, Part Two, II.)

4. Inspiration is an indispensable part of Scripture's uniqueness. What this implies for the interpreter is dealt with in our document on historical-critical methodology.

5. Although God is the primary author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit used the language, style, and other singular characteristics of the authors, and took into account their cultures, their immediate circumstances, and their immediate audiences. The text of Scripture makes this self-evident, and Scripture itself alludes to this human agency in a variety of ways. (e.g., the New Testament quotes the Old Testament by referring to human authors, Matt. 2:1, 17, 23; Acts 2:16, 31, 34; Rom. 9:29 et. al., St. Luke calls attention to his efforts to give an orderly account of events, 1:3, and St. Paul states in 1 Cor. 7:25 that he gives no command of the Lord but rather his own opinion in that particular place.)

6. The Inspiration of Scripture is verbal (i.e., the Holy Spirit inspired the very words of Scripture) and it is plenary (i.e., all of the Scripture is inspired).

7. The "how" of inspiration is a mystery; it is a miracle beyond human understanding which defies explication and description.

8. The divinely inspired character of the Scripture and all that this implies is something known only through faith by the believer, who is converted to faith in the Gospel by the Holy Spirit working through Law and Gospel. It is in fulfilling its God-given role in the creation of saving faith (see above, Thesis 3), that Scripture's revelatory and self-authenticating power as inspired Word of God is manifest: Is. 55:11, "so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it," and, 1 Cor. 1:21, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe."

B. Inerrancy

9. We affirm that Scripture, the inspired Word of God, is truthful and reliable.

10. In employing the term "inerrant" to describe this quality of Scripture's truthfulness and reliability, both moderates and conservatives make certain qualifications, but these qualifications differ. This is the crux of the problem among us as we indicated above in section II, "The Issue in Brief."

11. For our part we maintain that, if the term inerrancy is to be used at all as an attribute of Scripture, then it should be used in accordance with the witness of Scripture itself. The truth of the Scriptures is something to be evaluated in terms of their own criteria and of the qualities they themselves exhibit.

12. It is significant to note, then, that Scripture does not claim the attribute "inerrancy" for itself as we have often defined that term in our tradition. Indeed, there is no term in Scripture that corresponds to the traditional understanding of inerrancy as indicating "flawlessness" or "factual precision" in all parts of Scripture, even those peripheral to the intention of a given text of Scripture or to the purpose of Scripture as a whole.

13. The fact that Scripture itself does not use a given term or concept does not mean that the church cannot appropriate that term or concept in a doctrinal formulation intended to summarize what is considered to be a logical deduction from clear Scriptural evidence. The doctrine of the Trinity is a good example of such an ecclesiastical formulation. Following this rationale, the inference has been drawn that, because the Holy Spirit is the principal author of the text, it follows that the perfect God must produce an inerrant text.

14. However, for an inference drawn from Scripture to be accorded the status of a doctrine binding on the consciences of the church's pastors, teachers, and members, it must be demonstrably clear that the Scriptural evidence warrants such an inference. It is our judgment that the whole witness of Scripture to itself, both in its declaratory statements and in the characteristics of its text, does not support the use of inerrancy as indicating flawlessness or factual precision in all parts of Scripture.

15. What we discover in our study of Scripture is clear evidence that the Holy Spirit accommodated the language of the Scriptures to the peculiar characteristics and limitations of their authors and audiences throughout a lengthy and complex history of textual development and transmission. It is out of this process of the Spirit's work in and through the contingencies of history that the qualities of the Scriptures have emerged. And, as the sainted Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn once observed, "These qualities do not - speaking generally - include great precision in formulation, stenographic fidelity in reporting exact words, prosaic literalism in interpretation, bibliographically accurate citations of author and title, comprehensive documentation, carefully synchronized chronologies, a modern historiographic sense, harmonistically consistent adjustment of sources to one another and meticulously exact

descriptions of attendant historical, physical, and other scientific details. These were not generally the qualities of the men or of the cultures which the Holy Spirit employed, and where these qualities are absent in the Sacred Scriptures, this, too, is a mark of the Holy Spirit's condescension and accommodation not to error but to humanity. Admittedly the picture of the Sacred Scriptures that emerges when all these factors are taken into account is likely to be less tidy than a purely theoretical construct, but it is also likely to be more realistic, more correct, and more genuinely truthful." ("What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?" CTM, XXXVI, 8 (September 1965), p. 588.) The notion of inerrancy as flawlessness or factual precision is almost impossible to apply in any consistent and helpful way given the sort of accommodation just described. It would require a literalistic approach to the Scriptures that simply ignores the evidence of their historical, human dimension.

16. Fortunately, our own Lutheran tradition has always held to a "doctrine of accommodation" to explain the Holy Spirit's use of human authors and to make clear that we are not literalists. Conservative spokesmen for inerrancy also recognize the idea of accommodation and have accordingly made certain qualifications of inerrancy. They recognize, as we do, that Scripture contains verbal inexactitude in quotations, quotations according to sense, differences in parallel accounts, figurative and hyperbolic language, mythic elements as a mode of expression, accommodation to ancient cosmology, and the like. The recognition of these things in the Bible does not contradict inerrancy as long as: 1) it is the author's intention to use figurative or hyperbolic language; 2) the reader is not being deceived; 3) the statements in a real sense correspond to facts or truths; 4) the literary device or genre employed is indicated directly or indirectly ("indirectly" means that the text does not tell you what kind of language it is using; you as interpreter must make the judgment yourself on the basis of form). (CTM, XXXVIII (June 1967), pp. 363-375) All these qualifications are based on interpretive judgments concerning the way in which the text is speaking and the extent to which the Holy Spirit accommodated himself to the conditions of history.

17. Although there are differences between conservatives and moderates as to what conclusions are exegetically defensible in our study of Scripture, these differences do not touch on articles of faith set forth in the Confessions nor are they differences in principle on how we are to approach a study of the text of Sacred Scripture. All among us in the church recognize that the character of the text itself requires that we make interpretive judgments on the intent of the author of a given text and the manner in which the Holy Spirit accommodated himself to the conditions of history. As indicated by the previous paragraph, conservatives themselves, as well as moderates, operate according to this principle. And both do so in the spirit of being willingly submissive to the inspired text of Scripture.

18. In view of all the qualifications that are necessary in the face of the text and in the absence of any direct statement of Scripture, it is questionable whether "inerrancy," defined as flawlessness

or factual precision in all parts of Scripture, can be consistently applied in a meaningful way. It too easily becomes simply a defense for the traditional exegesis of certain portions of Scripture. For this reason the term could well be avoided.

C. The Truthfulness and Reliability of Scripture

19. The foregoing discussion of the problem of inerrancy has been made necessary by the current crisis in our synod. However, the thrust of our position on Scripture is not one of discrediting inerrancy. If the term is meant simply to emphasize the Holy Spirit's authorship of Scripture and the truthfulness and reliability of Scripture, we agree with it. The CTCR has stated this usage of the term quite well, "In calling the Scriptures inerrant the church is expressing the conviction of faith that these words, as words taught by the Holy Spirit, are truthful, wholly reliable, and uniquely powerful witness to the words and works of God, that these inspired words in their concrete human form are the very voice of the God of her salvation." ("A Study Document on Revelation, Inspiration and Inerrancy," Pt. Two, III.)

20. We reaffirm here what we have already affirmed above, that the inspired Scriptures, the Word of God, are truthful and reliable. They will in no way lead us astray. They express what God intends them to express and they accomplish what God intends them to accomplish. (See the statement prepared by the St. Louis Seminary faculty, "A Statement of the Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures," CTM, XXXI (1960), p. 626.) This places the emphasis of truthfulness and reliability upon God's personal address to us rather than stressing the errorless character of a book.

21. The Confessions themselves treat the truthfulness of Scripture by stressing the utter dependability of God's personal address in judgment, command, and promise. In the Large Catechism Luther points out that the Lord's Supper and Baptism are effective means of grace on the strength of Christ's Word and God's command. In his command and promise God does not err or deceive. (Pt. IV, 56, 57) Similarly, in further discussing our participation in the Lord's Supper, Luther says to those who do not feel the need for the grace of the sacrament that they should believe the judgment of the Scriptures upon their sin. God's judgment upon them is true. (V, 76-78) Again, with reference to the testimony of Christ concerning the real presence of his body and blood in the sacrament, the Formula of Concord affirms that "...God's Word is not false nor does it lie." (Ep., VII, 13) God's address to us in judgment, command, and promise is true and reliable.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND CONCERNS

22. The differences that exist in connection with the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture are not doctrinal and should not be divisive of fellowship.

23. When inerrancy is understood to mean flawlessness or factual precision in all parts of Scripture, quite apart from any consideration of Scripture's intention and salvific purpose, what happens is that a third kind of authority is introduced - neither normative nor causative - an "informational" or "factual" authority. This goes beyond what Scripture says of itself. Insistence upon this third kind of authority can easily distort our understanding of the true authority of Scripture. This authority resides simply in the fact that it is the Word of God, a fact which we apprehend by the power of the Spirit working through that Word of Law and Gospel. It is this witness of the Spirit to our spirit that guarantees the truth of our faith.

24. The insistence on "flawless" inerrancy as a necessary doctrine too often appeals to fear: the fear that Scripture's truthfulness and our faith will be destroyed if inerrancy is not maintained and the fear that any uncertainty or difference of opinion over Scripture or other matters of theology necessarily displays doctrinal permissiveness and an uncertain witness. These fears must be addressed:

a. We have said much already in this document concerning the self-authenticating power of the Word by the work of the Spirit through Law and Gospel. This should be enough to demonstrate our conviction that the truthfulness of the Scripture and the gift of our faith will be maintained among us by the same gracious God who has given us His saving Word. His promise in which we trust is our ultimate security as we struggle with our human limitations in a fallen world to understand the nature and message of His Word ever better and ever anew. Paul's word to the Corinthians is a word for us as well, "I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in Him with all speech and all knowledge - even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you - so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ; who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. 1:4-9)

b. By grace God's Spirit, as promised, has led us into the truth and preserved us in a united loyalty to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. By grace God's Spirit, as promised, has given us utterance to proclaim the Gospel to one another and to the world. This is no uncertain sound. By grace, as promised, God's Spirit has knit us together in the Body of Christ. In the face of the unified strength of our witness to the world, the differences we experience pale into insignificance. We should celebrate this unity. An honest struggle with theological problems is a sign of growth and strength. It is when we allow differences to be blown out of proportion and become a source of division that we give an uncertain sound.

25. The differences that do exist among us are worthy of prolonged fraternal discussions throughout the church, free from

recrimination. The only way to proceed in this is to sit down together and let the Scripture speak to us. In this way we can genuinely seek to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Gal. 4:3) and, "bearing one another in love," we will live the "message of reconciliation" with which we have been entrusted (2 Cor. 5:19).

Inspiration and Inerrancy

ITEM 2 - CONSERVATIVE POSITION PAPER

I. Inspiration

WE BELIEVE:

A. The Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and therefore the only source and norm of doctrine and practice. In saying that we regard the Scriptures as "God-breathed" or "inspired", we mean that God is their principal or primary author and that, therefore, Scripture is revelatory and self-authenticating. In affirming Scripture as the inspired Word of God and the sole source and norm of doctrine and practice we acknowledge its normative authority as the only standard of the church's teaching and life. ("We pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated." F.C., S.D., Rule and Norm 3)

B. Although God is the primary author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit used the language, style and certain other singular characteristics of the authors, their immediate circumstances and their immediate audiences.

C. The "how" of inspiration is a mystery; it is a miracle beyond human understanding which defies explication.

D. Scripture is a unique, divinely authoritative book because it is divinely inspired.

E. The knowledge of the divine character of Scripture and all that this implies is something known only through faith by the believer, who is converted to faith in the Gospel by the Holy Spirit operative in law and Gospel as defined and proclaimed in the inspired Scriptures. We agree with Luther's classical statement: "The Holy Scriptures are to be understood only through the Holy Spirit by whom they were written, and this Spirit can be found nowhere in more direct and living contact than in the sacred texts themselves which He has written." (WA 7, 97)

F. The saving purpose of Scripture is of paramount importance. 2 Tim. 3, 15 states that the sacred writings have the power to enlighten us for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The next verse then links this power to the inspired nature of the Scriptural word. Therefore emphasis on the inspired quality of Scripture witnesses to the saving Christ and conversely any tampering with this inspired quality of Scripture weakens and undermines the witness to Christ.

WE REJECT:

A. Any equivocation of inspiration which would limit it to a general "divine guidance".

B. Any redefinition of inspiration as referring only to efficacy.

C. Any denial of the divine authorship of Scripture by relativizing any biblical assertions.

D. Any method of interpretation which rejects or ignores the divine origin of Scripture, for instance the Historical-Critical Method.

II. Inerrancy

WE BELIEVE:

A. Scripture is inerrant in all its parts, including scientific, geographical and historical matters.

B. The doctrine of inerrancy, like the doctrine of the Trinity, is a necessary inference from Scriptural data. Also it is explicitly taught in Scripture:

John 10, 35: If he called them gods to whom the Word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken).

Matt. 5, 18: For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Matt. 26, 54: "But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"

Luke 24, 44: Then he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled."

46: and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead."

Luke 18, 31: And taking the twelve, he said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished."

The doctrine of inerrancy is not only a constant in Christian tradition but is also imposed by the frequent appeal of the NT and Jesus himself to the authority of the OT, appeals which are misleading if there is the possibility of error of any kind in Scripture.

C. The nature of this inerrancy is to be defined in terms of the Bible conforming in its statements with events that actually happened, with things as they really are.

D. However, this understanding of inerrancy is not to be interpreted as amounting to literalism. In faithfulness to the text one must allow for verbal inexactitude in quotations according to sense, differences in parallel accounts, figurative and hyperbolic language, mythic terminology as a mode of expression, accommodation to ancient cosmological expressions and the like. The existence of these things in the Bible does not contradict inerrancy.

WE REJECT:

A. Any interpretation of inerrancy that limits the truthfulness and reliability of Scripture to the fact that it does not lead us astray in its saving purpose.

B. Any attempt to restrict inerrancy to the biblical message as a whole or to the theological content of Scripture, in the belief that errors in historical, geographic and scientific areas are unimportant since these matters purportedly neither relate directly to the demand or promise of God nor contribute to the doctrinal formulations of the church.

(Our rejection is based on reasons such as the following:

1. There are no statements in Scripture which do not pertain to doctrine. (Rom. 15, 4; 2 Tim. 3, 16).
2. The two areas, historical-scientific-geographic and salvific, are inextricably intertwined. Any position legitimizing the separation of the two implies an extra-biblical criterion for determining which sections in Scripture are doctrinal and which are not.
3. Any doctrine of inerrancy which does not affirm the inerrancy of all Scripture is a denial of inerrancy. Logic affirms that partial inerrancy is not inerrancy at all.
4. Therefore those who hold to any position of partial or limited inerrancy are right in rejecting the term and should also frankly repudiate the whole concept.)

C. The contention that the doctrine of inerrancy is inferential, that is, deduced from a priori conceptions about Scripture rather than being taught by Scripture itself.

D. The view that the text of the Bible contains indications of a broader measure of accommodation to the contingencies of humanity, history and culture on the part of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the Scripture than we have indicated above in part II - D.

(We believe that to call a factual mistake "accommodation to humanity" is nothing more than to put a different label on what is still regarded as error.)

E. Any tampering with the text of the Bible as we have it such as:

1. The effort to get behind the text of the Bible as we have it to some form of pre-text that would have greater authority than the actual text of Scripture itself.

2. Denial that books of the Bible were actually written by those purporting to have written them (pseudepigraphy), for instance, the contention that Ephesians or the Pastoral Epistles may not have been written by Paul.

3. The assertion that some New Testament interpretations of the Old Testament may be first century exegesis which errs by reading into the Old Testament more than is actually there, for instance, our Lord's interpretation of Ps. 110 as a Messianic Psalm referring to himself. Cf. Matt. 22, 41ff.

4. The assertion that ethical directives not limited by the biblical text itself to certain times and circumstances may not be applicable to our day.

5. The assertion that any seeming discrepancies in the reporting of factual details or of the facts themselves are to be regarded as errors.

F. Avoidance of the term "inerrancy" on grounds of:

1. inadequacy

2. applicability only to the autographs (the original copies of the biblical books no longer in our possession)

3. uncertainty concerning the limits of the canon (which books properly belong in the Bible.)

(We contend that if loss of the autographs and problems of canonicity make it impossible to speak of the Scriptures as inerrant, then it is equally impossible to speak of them as "the inspired Word of God and the only source and norm of doctrine and practice," for these latter qualities would also apply in the same sense only to the autographs of canonical Scripture.)

G. Any approach to Scripture seeking out facts without reference to Scripture's saving purpose.

H. Any suggestion that the biblical text makes allowances for errors that do not affect our salvation, or that to concede the presence of such errors does not lead to a loss of confidence in Scripture and impede its saving purpose.

CONCLUSION

There can be no unique inspiration of Scripture without biblical inerrancy. We reject all contrary teachings.

The rejection of inerrancy limits and partially denies inspiration. We reject all contrary teachings.

Repudiation of factual inerrancy inevitably weakens and destroys confidence in the "salvific inerrancy," that is, Scripture's saving purpose. We reject all contrary teachings.

We hold that failure to uphold the total trustworthiness of Scripture will destroy confidence in both the power and authority of Scripture and thus undermine the Gospel.

We reject the view that affirming the total reliability (that is "inerrancy" as defined above), is appending a plus to the Gospel and, therefore, brings one under the anathema of St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians.

Inspiration and Inerrancy

ITEM 3 - MODERATE RESPONSE TO CONSERVATIVE POSITION PAPER

Almost all the points we would wish to make in response to the other caucus document on inspiration and inerrancy have already been made in our own statement on this issue. For this reason, we shall be brief.

I. REGARDING INSPIRATION:

We are pleased to point out that all theses, both in the "WE BELIEVE" and the "WE REJECT" sections, display a fundamental agreement with our own position. Even thesis (4) under "WE REJECT" represents our view. We also reject "Any method which rejects or ignores the divine origin of Scripture..." The historical-critical method as practiced among us does not do this. Our statement on historical-critical method presents ample evidence of this fact.

II. REGARDING INERRANCY:

Rather than discuss the many details in this section, we choose instead to underscore the central point of our statement on this subject:

We reject the elevation of any understanding of inerrancy to the status of a doctrine in the church which cannot be clearly established on the basis of Scripture alone.

We have argued at some length in our position paper on inspiration and inerrancy that the understanding of inerrancy held by our brothers in the other caucus does not have clear Scriptural support. Therefore we conclude here, as before, that their understanding of inerrancy does not deserve the status of doctrine and should not be a source of division or exclusion in the church.

The passages cited by our brothers as evidence that Scripture teaches their notion of inerrancy do not in fact establish that contention at all. Matthew 5:18; 26:54; Luke 24:44, 46 and Luke 18:31 all refer to the fact that God's will and promise, as recorded in the Old Testament, are being brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. These passages testify to the truthfulness and reliability of God's Word as his personal address to mankind. However, there is no clear exegetical evidence in these citations to support the further conclusion that the written text of Scripture, the divine-human vehicle of God's personal Word, is flawless in every detail.

Even John 10:35 with its statement, "Scripture cannot be broken," is essentially a "fulfillment" passage belonging to the same category as the others. The Greek verb, translated here as "broken", is elsewhere used in Scripture as an antonym of the verb "to be fulfilled" when the reference is to the Law or the Old Testament Scriptures. (e.g., Matt. 5:17,

18; John 7:23) Therefore, the phrase might well be translated, "Scripture cannot be kept from fulfillment." This rendering is supported by the context in which Jesus is making the claim of being the promised Messiah and the Son of God. (See, Richard Jungkuntz, "An Approach to the Exegesis of John 10:34-36," CTM, XXXV, 9 (October 1964), pp. 557-565.) Once more, the stress is not on the character of the text of Scripture but on the truthfulness and reliability of God whose promises and will are recorded in Scripture.

Because we do not agree that Scripture teaches the concept of inerrancy in the manner in which our brethren in the other caucus say it does, there is little point in answering their rejections. To the extent that these rejections are supposed to represent our view, they inevitably become distortions because what is rejected is an account of our position framed in terms of their definition of inerrancy. This has been a problem throughout the current dispute in Synod. The question is always posed in terms of whether or not "they" agree with "us." Having answered that question from one's own point of view, one then proceeds to "reject" those positions which appear to represent points of difference. The real question is, What does Scripture say to us on these matters? In a crisis like ours in which the mission of the Gospel is being subverted by useless division and strife it simply will not do to permit rupture in the church over matters which are not doctrinal since they are not clearly established in Scripture.

Inspiration and Inerrancy

ITEM 4 - CONSERVATIVE RESPONSE TO MODERATE POSITION PAPER*

Summary Statement

- 1-a. Conservatives contend that the Bible contains no errors of any kind (doctrinal, historical, geographic, scientific, etc.).
- b. Moderates hold that the Bible may and does contain errors in matters they do not see to be directly related to salvation. Thus, they write: "It is our judgment that the whole witness of Scripture to itself . does not support the use of inerrancy as indicating flawlessness or factual precision in all parts of Scripture."
- 2-a. Conservatives believe that asserting the presence of errors or flaws of any kind in the Bible undermines acceptance of its reliability and authority.
- b. Moderates believe that asserting the presence of errors in the Bible in no way affects one's confidence in its reliability and authority. Thus, they write: "Faith does not require that we buttress or guard the authority and truthfulness of the Scripture with rationalization concerning the errorless character of its text. In faith we trust that God uses various forms of human utterance, even those which appear to have contradictions or deficiencies, to convey to us His divine truth."
- 3-a. Conservatives believe that the two conflicting views on inerrancy cannot both be tolerated in the church's teaching.
- b. Moderates are ambivalent in their tolerance and rejection. On the one hand, they plead that both views should have the right to exist in the church and should be in dialog. They write: "In the fact of the unified strength of our witness to the world, the differences we experience pale into insignificance. We should celebrate this unity. An honest struggle with theological problems is a sign of growth and strength." On the other hand, they condemn the conservative view of Biblical inerrancy as an intolerable addition to the Gospel. They write: "Such a claim for inerrancy goes beyond what the Scripture claims for itself. Therefore, to insist upon it as doctrine is to bind consciences to human opinion."

*See Appendix 1 for Explanation of Conservative Format and Appendix 2 for Moderate Caucus Evaluation of the Report of the ACDC.

Response in Detail

I. INSPIRATION

A. Definition

In saying that we regard the Scriptures as "God-breathed" or inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), we are saying that God is their principal or primary author (2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Thess. 2:13). [2]

The inspiration of Scripture is verbal (i.e., the Holy Spirit inspired the very words of the Scripture) and it is plenary (i.e., all of the Scripture is inspired). [3]

God's initiative and authorship in giving the Scriptures is only understandable in view of His purpose for the Scripture. Therefore, inspiration also pertains to Scripture's causative authority, which refers to its power in Law and Gospel to lead people to saving faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. [2]

These statements dealing with the definition of inspiration already point to two main areas of disagreement:

1. In affirming verbal and plenary inspiration, the Moderates must either affirm inerrancy in all of Scripture or else assert that God inspired errors. We shall find that they reject a flawless or factually precise text.

2. In including the causative authority of Scripture, its purpose and power, as a part of the definition of inspiration, and emphasizing this causative authority throughout the discussion, the Moderates greatly detract from the self-authenticating nature of the Scripture. Inspiration deals with what the Scripture is, not with what it does. Scripture's authority does not rest on man's understanding or acceptance, but solely on its divine authorship.

B. Normative Authority

The Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and therefore the only norm of doctrine and practice. That is, the Scriptures possess what we call normative authority. (SA, II, ii, 15; FCSD, Rule and Norm, FC, Ep., Rule and Norm, FCSD, II, 8) [2]

The importance of this fundamental agreement should not be underestimated. The point at issue is: What does the Scripture itself enable us to say about its truthfulness and reliability?[1]

Rather than impose our own definition of "inerrancy" on the sacred text, we let the Bible itself define its inerrancy. We believe that "God will not deceive us," and we do not dictate to Him how He must give us His truth. Rather, we accept the Scriptures as they are and define the terms "truthful" and "reliable" according to the Scripture's own testimony.

In other words Scripture alone can give evidence of the manner in which it pleased the Holy Spirit to use human authors, in all their individuality and limitations and literary forms, in all their rich variety, to speak the Word of God to humankind. We must employ the principle of sola Scriptura also in formulating our doctrine of Holy Scripture itself. [2]

For our part we maintain that, if the term inerrancy is to be used at all as an attribute of Scripture, then it should be used in accordance with the witness of Scripture itself. The truth of the Scriptures is something to be evaluated in terms of their own criteria and of the qualities they themselves exhibit. [4]

The fact that Scripture itself does not use a given term or concept does not mean that the church cannot appropriate that term or concept in a doctrinal formulation intended to summarize what is considered to be a logical deduction from clear Scriptural evidence. The doctrine of the Trinity is a good example of such an ecclesiastical formulation. Following this rationale, the inference has been drawn that, because the Holy Spirit is the principal author of the text, it follows that the perfect God must produce an inerrant text. [4]

Conservatives affirm strongly that Scripture possesses normative authority as the Moderates describe it here. In particular, they affirm that this normative authority itself requires that man accept Scripture's own teaching about its inerrant character. However, one finds below that the Moderates limit the normative authority of Scripture to passages which explicitly relate to its intention and purpose as they understand them

This is contrary to what they state here. It is, in fact, a denial of the normative authority of Scripture, which nowhere suggests that its authority be abridged in this way. With respect to their point 13, a third alternative appears to have eluded the Moderate analysis. Conservatives believe that inerrancy, like the doctrine of the Trinity, is a doctrine explicitly taught in Scripture but not explicitly named.

There is no inherent reassurance in being told that a particular attitude toward Scripture is derived from an analysis of the phenomena Scripture itself manifests. Those who regard Scripture as a jumbled mass of contradictions make the same claim. Everyone (conservative, moderate, fundamentalist, atheist) purports to base his view of Scripture on the conclusions he is convinced he must necessarily draw when he lets the text of the Bible speak for itself.

Conservatives are saying that mutually exclusive conclusions on such a fundamental topic, however arrived at, cannot coexist in the same ecclesiastical fellowship.

C. Accommodation

Although God is the primary author of Scripture, the Holy Spirit used the language, style, and other singular characteristics of the authors and took into account their cultures, their immediate circumstances, and their immediate audiences. The text of Scripture makes this self-evident, and Scripture itself alludes to this human agency in a variety of ways. (e.g., the New Testament quotes the Old Testament by referring to human authors, Matt. 2:1, 17, 23; Acts 2:16, 31, 34; Rom. 9:29, et. al. St. Luke calls attention to his efforts to give an orderly account of events, 1:3 and St. Paul states in 1 Cor. 7:25 that he gives no command of the Lord but rather his own opinion in that particular place.) [3]

...The literary device or genre employed is indicated directly or indirectly ("indirectly" means that the text does not tell you what kind of language it is using; you as interpreter must make the judgment yourself on the basis of form). (CTM XXXVIII, June 1967, pp. 363-375) All these qualifications are based on interpretive judgments concerning the way in which the text is speaking and the extent to which the Holy Spirit accommodated himself to the conditions of history. [5]

What we discover in our study of Scripture is clear evidence that the Holy Spirit accommodated the language of the Scriptures to the peculiar characteristics and limitations of their authors

and audiences throughout a lengthy and complex history of textual development and transmission. It is out of this process of the Spirit's work in and through the contingencies of history that the qualities of the Scriptures have emerged. [4]

Fortunately, our own Lutheran tradition has always held to a "doctrine of accommodation" to explain the Holy Spirit's use of human authors and to make clear that we are not literalists. Conservative spokesmen for inerrancy also recognize the idea of accommodation and have accordingly made certain qualifications of inerrancy. They recognize, as we do, that Scripture contains verbal inexactitude in quotations, quotations according to sense, differences in parallel accounts, figurative and hyperbolic language, mythic elements as a mode of expression, accommodation to ancient cosmology, and the like. The recognition of these things in the Bible does not contradict inerrancy as long as: 1) it is the author's intention to use figurative or hyperbolic language; 2) the reader is not being deceived; 3) the statements in a real sense correspond to facts or truths.... [5]

..."These qualities do not - speaking generally - include great precision in formulation, stenographic fidelity in reporting exact words, prosaic literalism in interpretation, bibliographically accurate citations of author and title, comprehensive documentation, carefully synchronized chronologies, a modern historiographic sense, harmonistically consistent adjustment of sources to one another and meticulously exact descriptions of attendant historical, physical and other scientific details. These were not generally the qualities of the men or of the cultures which the Holy Spirit employed, and where these qualities are absent in the Sacred Scriptures, this, too, is a mark of the Holy Spirit's condescension and accommodation not to error but to humanity. Admittedly the picture of the Sacred Scriptures that emerges when all these factors are taken into account is likely to be less tidy than a purely theoretical construct, but it is also likely to be more realistic, more correct, and more genuinely truthful." ("What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?" CTM, XXXVI, 8 (September 1965), p. 588.) [4f]

Scripture is the very Word of God, in human speech. Thus, the Spirit in writing Scripture did accommodate Himself to human language and language styles, and the text does contain the sorts of verbal inexactitudes which this implies of itself. This we have delineated in our document, and all are in agreement with it. It is something very different, however, from what we find (and strongly reject) to be included by Moderates under their phrase of accommodation to "cultures, their immediate circumstances and their immediate audiences," their "accommodation not to error but to humanity."

The accommodation of God to the human situation in authoring the Scriptures must be carefully defined or the uniqueness of Scripture is undercut. We emphasize both the human and the divine, but the divine through the human. We do not exalt the human over the divine nor do we, in our thinking, permit the human to control the divine. Cf. Matt. 1:22. See also Mark 12:36 and parallels.

The Moderate paper alludes to St. Luke's description of "his efforts to give an orderly account of events 1:3." Stated this baldly, the proposition might lead one to conclude that Luke writes solely on the basis of historical research like other human authors. That inspiration enables the writer to transcend the human situation is not indicated nor even intimated. Yet it is noteworthy that neither Luke nor any other canonical writer apologizes for deficiencies and errors after the manner of -

The Prolog of Ecclesiasticus:

"You are urged therefore to read with good will and attention, and to be indulgent in cases where, despite our diligent labor in translating, we may seem to have rendered some phrases imperfectly."

2 Maccabees 15, 37c. 38:

"So I too will here end my story. If it is well told and to the point, that is what I myself desired; if it is poorly done and mediocre, that was the best I could do." (Cf. 2, 24-33)

The comparison of these apocryphal references to Luke's introduction to his Gospel is striking:

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed."

The contrast of the apocryphal self-understanding and that of St. Paul is absolute:

"And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit." (1 Cor. 2, 13a.)

We call attention to the fact that in our understanding of accommodation we do not accept biblical "accommodation to ancient cosmology" but rather "accommodation to ancient cosmological expressions."

Also requiring more precise definition and delimitation is the linking of accommodation to "a lengthy and complex history of textual development and transmission." It is on the basis of this kind of understanding that

critical methodology undertakes to get behind the canonical text and establish a more authoritative text behind the text, an undertaking which we reject. To call alleged errors in the Bible "accommodation to humanity" is a meaningless euphemism. Such accommodation to erring humanity ("to err is human") is the same thing as accommodation to error.

D. Mechanism

The "how" of inspiration is a mystery; it is a miracle beyond human understanding which defies explication and description. [3]

It is not the "how" of inspiration which is in dispute among us. We are agreed that inspiration is a miracle. The disagreement concerns the nature of the Biblical text, which results from the miracle of divine inspiration. If it is a human, flawed text, that would be no miracle.

E. Uniqueness

Inspiration is an indispensable part of Scripture's uniqueness. What this implies for the interpreter is dealt with in our document on historical-critical methodology. [3]

We agree.

F. The Mindset of Faith

The divinely inspired character of the Scripture and all that this implies is something known only through faith by the believer, who is converted to faith in the Gospel by the Holy Spirit working through Law and Gospel. It is in fulfilling its God-given role in the creation of saving faith that Scripture's revelatory and self-authenticating power as inspired Word of God is manifest: Is. 55: 11: "so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it," and, 1 Cor. 1:21: "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe." [3]

We, too, believe that Scripture authenticates itself in a way that can be known only to faith. However, it is our conviction that Scripture authenticates itself as inerrant and not as flawed.

Furthermore, it is a caricature to intimate that the Conservative insistence on the reliability of Scripture derives from a faith which requires "that we buttress or guard the authority and truthfulness of the Scripture with rationalizations concerning the errorless character of its text." The affirmation of inerrancy is an act of faith, not of reason. It is the

Conservatives who can rightly say: "In faith we trust that God uses various forms of human utterance, even those which appear to have contradictions or deficiencies, to convey to us His divine truth." It is when we find our Moderate brothers striking the "appear to" that we must protest. As long as it is only the "appearance" of errors or deficiencies that is affirmed, faith that has been created by the witness of Scripture still dares to trust that Scripture and build on it. However, the assertion that Scripture does have contradictions and deficiencies is too much even for the dare of faith.

II. INERRANCY

A. Affirmation

We affirm that Scripture, the inspired Word of God, is truthful and reliable. [3]

B. Inerrancy: A Doctrine Explicitly Taught in Scripture

All affirm the truthfulness and reliability of Scripture as something which the Scripture claims for itself and something which is a corollary of its inspired character. [1]

If truthfulness and reliability are something "the Scripture claims for itself" as well as being "something which is a corollary of its inspired character," how can it be denied that inerrancy is explicitly taught, albeit the term itself is not used?

It is significant to note, then, that Scripture does not claim the attribute "inerrancy" for itself as we have often defined that term in our tradition. Indeed, there is no term in Scripture that corresponds to the traditional understanding of inerrancy as indicating "flawlessness" or "factual precision" in all parts of Scripture, even those peripheral to the intention of a given text of Scripture or to the purpose of Scripture as a whole. [4]

However, for an inference drawn from Scripture to be accorded the status of a doctrine binding on the consciences of the church's pastors, teachers, and members, it must be demonstrably clear that the Scriptural evidence warrants such an inference. It is our judgment that the whole witness of Scripture to itself, both in its declaratory statements and in the characteristics of its text, does not support the use of inerrancy as indicating flawlessness or factual precision in all parts of Scripture. [4]

However, more is at stake than just a technical point of theology. If a definition of inerrancy which

stresses the flawless character of factual precision of all parts of the Bible is raised to the level of a doctrine and considered necessary for maintaining the authority of Scripture and the truth of the Gospel, then serious problems arise. First of all such a claim for inerrancy goes beyond what the Scripture claims for itself. Therefore, to insist upon it as doctrine is to bind consciences to human opinion. [1f]

It is a misreading of the Conservative position when Moderates repeatedly speak of a "factual precision in all parts of Scripture." Actually, this description of the Conservative view conflicts with concessions the Moderates themselves make: "They (Conservative spokesmen for inerrancy) recognize, as we do, that Scripture contains verbal inexactitude in quotations, quotations according to sense, differences in parallel accounts, figurative and hyperbolic language . . ." There is also some ambiguity in describing the doctrine of inerrancy as being "accorded the status of a doctrine binding on the consciences of the church's pastors, teachers, and members." This kind of terminology is usually reserved, according to Lutheran confessional usage, for doctrines necessary for salvation. Conservatives do not claim this kind of saving necessity for the doctrine of inerrancy.

When inerrancy is understood to mean flawlessness or factual precision in all parts of Scripture, quite apart from any consideration of Scripture's intention and salvific purpose, what happens is that a third kind of authority is introduced - neither normative nor causative - an "informational" or "factual" authority. This goes beyond what Scripture says of itself. [7]

Although there are differences between Conservatives and Moderates as to what conclusions are exegetically defensible in our study of Scripture, these differences do not touch on articles of faith set forth in the confessions nor are they differences in principle on how we are to approach a study of the text of Sacred Scripture. [5]

It is a misinterpretation of the Conservative position to describe it as teaching flawlessness and factual precision "quite apart from any consideration of Scripture's intent and salvific purpose." Conservatives see Scripture's "intent and salvific purpose" inextricably intertwined with the facts and events the Biblical narrative records. If the salvific facts and events are erroneously recorded, then the salvific intent is imperiled. A position which holds Scripture to be in error concerning facts and events menaces the whole concept of an incarnational theology. And if ever the incarnation is undermined (even unintentionally and unwittingly), Christianity will have been toppled for those who have been thus deluded.

C. Definition

We reaffirm here what we have already affirmed above, that the inspired Scriptures, the Word of God, are truthful and reliable. They will in no way lead us astray. They express what God intends them to express, and they accomplish what God intends them to accomplish. (See the statement prepared by the St. Louis Seminary faculty, "A Statement of the Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures," CTM, XXXI (1960), p. 626.) This places the emphasis of truthfulness and reliability upon God's personal address to us rather than stressing the errorless character of a book. [6]

The foregoing discussion of the problem of inerrancy has been made necessary by the current crisis in our synod. However, the thrust of our position on Scripture is not one of discrediting inerrancy. If the term is meant simply to emphasize the Holy Spirit's authorship of Scripture and the truthfulness and reliability of Scripture, we agree with it. The CTCR has stated this usage of the term quite well: "In calling the Scriptures inerrant the church is expressing the conviction of faith that these words, as words taught by the Holy Spirit, are truthful, wholly reliable, and uniquely powerful witness to the words and works of God, that these inspired words in their concrete human form are the very voice of the God of her salvation." ("A Study Document on Revelation: Inspiration and Inerrancy," Pt. Two, III.) [6].

In what sense, if any, is "inerrancy" a suitable and helpful term for expressing that truthfulness? Indeed, can we even define inerrancy in a way that can be consistently and meaningfully applied to all parts of Scripture? These questions identify the technical, theological point of controversy. [1]

The Moderate redefinition of inerrancy consistently describes it as one of function. We do not see how function and fact can be separated and compartmentalized. Does not Scripture lead us astray if "legendary accretions" are presented as sober fact, a position taken by many critics?

As redefined by Moderates, not only the term but the very concept of inerrancy is abandoned. This should be forthrightly stated. Much confusion concerning the issues would be dispelled if Moderates would explicitly reject the whole concept of inerrancy and then describe their belief under a new rubric such as "Functional Reliability."

D. Qualifications

In employing the term "inerrant" to describe this quality of Scripture's truthfulness and reliability, both Moderates and Conservatives make certain qualifications, but these qualifications differ. This is the crux of the problem among us as we indicated above. [4]

In view of all the qualifications that are necessary in the face of the text and in the absence of any direct statement of Scripture, it is questionable whether "inerrancy," defined as flawlessness or factual precision in all parts of Scripture, can be consistently applied in a meaningful way. It too easily becomes simply a defense for the traditional exegesis of certain portions of Scripture. For this reason the term could well be avoided.[5]

The notion of inerrancy as flawlessness or factual precision is almost impossible to apply in any consistent and helpful way, given the sort of accommodation just described. It would require a literalistic approach to the Scriptures that simply ignores the evidence of their historical, human dimension. [5]

All among us in the church recognize that the character of the text itself requires that we make interpretive judgments on the intent of the author of a given text and the manner in which the Holy Spirit accommodated himself to the conditions of history. As indicated by the previous paragraph, Conservatives themselves, as well as Moderates, operate according to this principle. And both do so in the spirit of being willingly submissive to the inspired text of Scripture. [5]

What difference does inerrancy make if the concept must be qualified? Much, in every way. Take an example: Matthew, Mark, and John record that Jesus walked on the sea. They give a different version of the words of reassurance He spoke to His disciples: Matt. 14:27 and Mark 6:50 - "take heart" (tharseite); John 6:20 - "do not be afraid" (me phobeisthe). The qualification imposed upon us by these differences is that the Gospels are not purporting to give a tape-recorder version of the words of Jesus. But the concept of inerrancy remains significant and crucial. Because the Scriptures have imposed themselves upon us as inerrant, we are bold to accept their witness when they tell us Jesus literally walked on the water (though critics regularly deny this). Furthermore, our experience with inerrant Scripture emboldens us to appropriate all the meaning our exegesis can extract from the two

versions of the words of a Jesus who can even walk on water. We are confident that the Biblical record of His words warrants our joyous grasping of all the comfort we can discover in both the Synoptic and the Johannine reports. We don't fret about trying to discover with tape-recorder accuracy what the ipsissima verba may have been. We know that the words and their message are inerrantly given by the Holy Spirit and are not merely a human-redactional irrelevance or nicety.

Another example: The concept of Scriptural inerrancy is surely not irrelevant in one's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15. If the person who accepts inerrancy makes a qualification at v. 52 and says that the trumpet is not literal but adapted from apocalyptic imagery, this does not make the whole concept of inerrancy meaningless in this resurrection chapter. One need only try out the Moderate and Conservative adjectives on vv. 3 and 4. "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the: (Moderate version) flawed but reliable scriptures; (Conservative version) inerrant scriptures, and that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the: (Moderate version) flawed but reliable scriptures; (Conservative version) inerrant scriptures." Inerrancy does make a difference.

E. Consequences of Weakening

The insistence on "flawless" inerrancy as a necessary doctrine too often appeals to fear: the fear that Scripture's truthfulness and our faith will be destroyed if inerrancy is not maintained and the fear that any uncertainty or difference of opinion over Scripture or other matters of theology necessarily displays doctrinal permissiveness and an uncertain witness. [7]

There is nothing improper about fear of fearful things. If there is evidence that denial of inerrancy consistently leads to disastrous results, there is reason to fear. In fact, not to fear would be naive and irresponsible. A reductio ad horrendum is not illogical. Therefore we are uncomfortable with a statement such as: ". . . the truthfulness of the Scripture and the gift of our faith will be maintained among us by the same gracious God who has given us his saving Word." Indeed, "His promise in which we trust is our ultimate security . . ." However, He who promised has also exhorted and warned: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31, 32.) And through His apostle we learn that, "we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God" (1 Tim. 4, 10).

To be sure, the fear called for is not one of paralysis or panic which fails to take into account God's presence and power. It is the right kind of fear about things rightly to be feared, Cf. Acts 5:5-11; Phil. 2:12; 1 Tim. 5:20; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rom. 11:20; Gal 4:11; Heb 4:1.

This faith does not require that we buttress or guard the authority and truthfulness of the Scripture with rationalizations concerning the errorless character of its text. In faith we trust that God uses various forms of human utterance, even those which appear to have contradictions or deficiencies, to convey to us His divine truth. [2]

Insistence upon this third kind of authority can easily distort our understanding of the true authority of Scripture. This authority resides simply in the fact that it is the Word of God, a fact which we apprehend by the power of the Spirit working through that Word of Law and Gospel. It is this witness of the Spirit to our spirit that guarantees the truth of our faith. [7]

More importantly, to rest the authority of Scripture on such a version of inerrancy detracts from Scripture's real authority. All authority is from God; Scripture is authoritative simply because it is God's Word. Through that Word of Law and Gospel, the Spirit works to create and sustain faith in Christ. In this faith we recognize Scripture as the Word of God and its truth as the sole authority for our doctrine and life. [2]

Isn't there something almost tautological about saying: "Scripture is authoritative simply because it is God's Word?" How far removed is this from saying: Scripture is authoritative because it is Scripture; or, Scripture is God's Word because it is God's Word?

The Confessions themselves treat the truthfulness of Scripture by stressing the utter dependability of God's personal address in judgment, command and promise. In the Large Catechism Luther points out that The Lord's Supper and baptism are effective means of grace on the strength of Christ's Word and God's command. In his command and promise God does not err or deceive. (Pt. IV, 56, 57) Similarly, in further discussing our participation in the Lord's Supper, Luther says to those who do not feel the need for the grace of the sacrament that they should believe the judgment of the Scriptures upon their sin. God's judgment upon them is true. (V. 76-78) Again, with reference to the testimony of Christ concerning the real presence of his body and blood in the sacrament, the Formula of Concord affirms that "...God's Word is not false nor does it lie." (Ep., VII, 13) God's address to us in judgment, command, and promise is true and reliable. [6]

We do not agree that the Confessions separate function from fact. For instance, it is of the Biblical narrative concerning David and Saul (together with the attendant, undetachable spiritual lessons) that the Large Catechism says: "These words must stand and prove to be true since God cannot lie or deceive." (Large Catechism, 46. Tappert, p. 370) It is, therefore, inaccurate to describe the Confessions' understanding of the truthfulness and reliability of Scripture as having reference merely to its function.

We have said much already in this document concerning the self-authenticating power of the Word by the work of the Spirit through Law and Gospel. This should be enough to demonstrate our conviction that the truthfulness of the Scripture and the gift of our faith will be maintained among us by the same gracious God who has given us His saving Word. His promise in which we trust is our ultimate security as we struggle with our human limitations in a fallen world to understand the nature and message of His Word ever better and ever anew. Paul's word to the Corinthians is a word for us as well, "I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in Him with all speech and all knowledge - even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you - so that you are not lacking in any Spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ; who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. 2, 4-9) [7]

God's promise in which we trust is, of course, our ultimate security. However, with a doctrine of flawed Scripture the promise inevitably becomes unclear and uncertain. Eventually one no longer knows for sure what the promise is.

F. Obfuscations

Thus we consider inspiration as an integral part of the saving work of the Holy Spirit as Scripture itself does in proclaiming its own purpose: "the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15; see also, Rom. 1:16; 10:17; 15:4; John 20:31) This purpose, which includes teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness, is linked to the Spirit's work of inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16) and places that work in the context of God's saving activity in history. (The saving purpose and power of the Word through the work of the Spirit is amply attested in the Confessions: Ap. IV, 67; LC, Preface, II; LC, Pt. I, 91-92, 102; LC, Pt. II, 38; FCSD, II, 50, 52, XI, 44. The CTCR's "A Study

Document on Revelation, Inspiration and Inerrancy" rightly stresses the connection between the saving power and purpose of the Spirit and His work of inspiration, Part Two, II.) [2f]

We, too, celebrate the self-authenticating power of the Scripture, the marvels of God's grace, the Spirit's leading us into truth, all unified witness to the Gospel. However, all this celebrating does not dull our minds nor blind our eyes to the disasters which ensue for the Gospel when Scripture is in any way undermined.

By grace God's Spirit, as promised, has led us into the truth and preserved us in a united loyalty to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. By grace God's Spirit, as promised, has given us utterance to proclaim the Gospel to one another and to the world. This is no uncertain sound. By grace, as promised, God's Spirit has knit us together in the Body of Christ. In the face of the unified strength of our witness to the world, the differences we experience pale into insignificance. We should celebrate this unity. An honest struggle with theological problems is a sign of growth and strength. It is when we allow differences to be blown out of proportion and become a source of division that we give an uncertain sound. [7]

Licit toleration is evidence of love; illicit toleration is evidence of willingness to surrender truth.

G. Implications for Fellowship

The differences that exist in connection with the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture are not doctrinal and should not be divisive of fellowship. [6]

In the face of the unified strength of our witness to the world, the differences we experience pale into insignificance. [7]

The differences that do exist among us are worthy of prolonged fraternal discussions throughout the church, free from recrimination. The only way to proceed in this is to sit down together and let the Scripture speak to us. In this way we can genuinely seek to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Gal. 4:3) and, "forebearing one another in love," we will live the "message of reconciliation" with which we have been entrusted (2 Cor. 5:19). [7f]

However, more is at stake than just a technical point of theology. If a definition of inerrancy which

stresses the flawless character of factual precision of all parts of the Bible is raised to the level of a doctrine and considered necessary for maintaining the authority of Scripture and the truth of the Gospel, then serious problems arise.

[1]

If "to insist upon it (inerrancy) as doctrine is to bind consciences to human opinion," how can Moderate and Conservative beliefs co-exist in the same fellowship? Do Moderates really believe that Conservatives consider inerrancy only an opinion? Do Moderates consider their position to be only an opinion?

We also advocate fraternal discussions. But we do not believe these can be prolonged interminably. Neither do we believe that the publica doctrina of the synod should be undercut in classroom lectures at our seminaries and teachers' colleges while such fraternal discussions are under way.

Since Moderates charge Conservatives with misunderstanding and misinterpreting Scripture, it is difficult to comprehend their willingness to tolerate what they reject as un- and anti-Biblical. Such toleration of irreconcilables would make the church schizophrenic. We believe Scripture has spoken to us and that we must choose between incompatible alternatives. Our experience with Scripture can be described by a small but significant change in the formulation of P. T. Forsyth: "The true minister ought to find the words and phrases of the Bible so full of spiritual food and felicity that he has some difficulty in not believing in verbal inspiration." On the basis of our experience we would modify: "difficulty in not believing in the inerrancy of Scripture." And then we would confess: "The difficulty has been overwhelming: we believe."

It is noteworthy that Luther did not see the fulfillment of prophecy as limited to soteriological content apart from its setting. For instance, in commenting on Isaiah 53:5ff. he says: "The first three Evangelists describe only the bare events. Isaiah, however, predicts the events, the cause, the fruit, and the use." (*Tres primi Evangelistae describunt tantum nudam historiam, Esaias vero praedicat historiam, causam, fructum at usum.* WA 40, III, 715).

Historical events and soteriology are inseparable both in prophecy and fulfillment, and both are inseparably intertwined in any meaningful doctrine of the reliability of Scripture. If Isaiah was muddled in what he by inspiration predicted of the historia, it is illogical to assume that he was inerrant when he came to causa, fructus and usus.

PART B - GOSPEL AND SCRIPTURE

ITEM 1 - CONSERVATIVE POSITION PAPER

INTRODUCTION

A controversy has arisen in our midst concerning the relationship between Scripture and Gospel and hence concerning the nature of Biblical authority.

The question at issue is not whether the Gospel existed before its message of power was committed to writing in the Scriptures. This we affirm. Nor is the question at issue whether our view of the Scriptures is a result of our faith in the Gospel. This too we affirm.

The questions at issue are: Is the Scripture the authority that establishes and regulates the statement, confession and proclamation of the Christian faith? And is this Scripture authoritative on all matters on which it clearly speaks, or only on those matters which directly touch or affect the Gospel?

We believe, teach, and affirm that while the Gospel is the chief article of the Christian faith, "the content of the Gospel and the terms in which this content is expressed must be taken from the Scriptures" (Gospel and Scripture, Page 17). With our Fathers in Christ we confess that "it is not in the power of man . . . to assert, without a sure word of God concerning God's will, that he ceases to be angry" (Apology IV, 262).

We further believe, teach, and affirm that while the Scriptures can never be in conflict with the message of free remission of sins by grace through faith in Jesus Christ our Redeemer, our appeal to the Gospel as the heart and center of Christian teaching does not relativize the rest of the Scriptures. "The whole Bible is God's inspired, authoritative Word on all matters concerning which it speaks" (Gospel and Scripture, Page 12).

"In order to explain this disagreement in a Christian way and according to the Word of God, and by God's grace to arrive at a complete settlement" (FC, SD, IV. 6) we shall state our position by way of thesis and antithesis. The antitheses may or may not represent the views of any or all of the moderates. They do represent views held by some scholars in our day. If the moderates will respond to both theses and antitheses and indicate what they accept and what they reject, areas of agreement and disagreement will be evident and the issues clearly delineated for the church.

1. When we speak of the Gospel we realize that "the little word 'Gospel' does not always have one and the same meaning but is used in a two-fold way, both in the Holy Scripture of God and by ancient and modern theologians" (FC, SD, V. 3). In its strict sense, the Gospel is the proclamation of God's free and redeeming grace in Jesus Christ. Our Confessions affirm, "But the Gospel, strictly speaking, is the kind of doctrine that teaches what a man who has not kept the Law and is

condemned by it should believe, namely, that Christ has satisfied and paid for all guilt and without man's merit has obtained and won for him forgiveness of sins, the 'righteousness that avails before God,' and eternal life" (FC, Ep., V. 5).

2. In its broad sense the word Gospel "is used in such a way that we understand by it the entire teaching of Christ, our Lord, which in His public Ministry on earth and in the New Testament He ordered to be observed" (FC, FD, V. 4). In the issue in controversy, we refer the word Gospel to its strict or narrow sense, that is, the proclamation of God's grace to sinners in Jesus Christ.

3. This Gospel message is "the chief article of the Christian doctrine," "without which no poor conscience can have any abiding comfort or rightly understand the riches of the grace of Christ" (Apology, German version, IV. 2.3).

The Gospel is the key to the Scripture, therefore, in the sense that it opens the door to the right understanding of the Scriptures. No interpretation of the Scriptures dare rob the Lord Jesus of His honor as Savior, diminish the Gospel, or obliterate God's gracious promises.

This truth is affirmed by our Fathers when they say, "This is what we condemn in our opponent's position, that by interpreting such passages of the Scriptures in either a philosophical or Jewish manner, they eliminate from them the righteousness of faith, and Christ, the Mediator" (Apology IV, 376). Again, "We must always keep this important teaching (the Gospel) in view. In this way, we can oppose those who reject Christ, destroy the Gospel, and maliciously twist the Scriptures to suit the man-made theory that by our works we purchase the forgiveness of sins" (Apology, IV. 260).

4. The Scriptures are "the pure, infallible, and unalterable Word of God" (Preface to Book of Concord, Page 8). The Scriptures are the Word of God because the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets, evangelists, and apostles. "Without the external Word they (the prophets) were not holy, and the Holy Spirit would not have moved them to speak while they were still unholy. They were holy, St. Peter says, because the Holy Spirit spoke through them" (Smalcald Articles iii, VIII.13).

We therefore believe, teach, and affirm that the words of Scripture are the words of God. This is the confession of the Fathers when they say, "It is surely amazing that our opponents are unmoved by the many passages of the Scriptures that clearly attribute justification to faith and specifically deny it to works. Do they suppose that this is repeated so often for no reason? Do they suppose that these words fell from the Holy Spirit unawares?" (Apology IV.107f).

5. The Scriptures are the basis for all that our Father Confessors believed, taught, and confessed. They said, "As indicated above, our disposition and attention has always been directed toward the goal that no other doctrine be treated and taught in our lands, territories, schools, churches, than that alone which is based on the Holy Scriptures of God ..."

(Preface to the Book of Concord, Page 12). Particularly the Augsburg Confession, including the Article on Justification, "was compiled out of the divine, prophetic, and apostolic Scriptures" (Preface to the Book of Concord, Page 3).

6. The certainty of the Confessors regarding their confession resulted from their complete confidence in the Scriptures. "We are certain of our Christian confession and faith on the basis of the divine, prophetic, and apostolic Scriptures" (Preface to the Book of Concord, Page 12f). The agreement that they found both in content and in the formulation of the chief articles of the Christian faith, was also based on a common confidence in the complete and utter truthfulness of the Scriptures. "We repeat once again that we are not minded to manufacture anything new by this work of agreement, or to depart in any way at all, either in content or in formulation, from the divine truth that our pious forebearers and we have acknowledged and confessed in the past, for our agreement is based on the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures" (Preface to the Book of Concord, Page 13).

In the light of what has been said, we believe, teach, and affirm that the inspiration of the Scripture pertains to the unique operation of God's Spirit in connection with the writing of the Holy Scriptures and to their "God-breathed" nature as such. And we reject and condemn as contrary to the Word of God the view that inspiration of the Word pertains to the effective power (efficacy) of the Scriptures to bring men and women to salvation through the Gospel.

We repeat our conviction that the Scriptures are authoritative on all matters concerning which they speak and we reject and condemn as contrary to the Word of God the view that any teaching which does not promote the truth and sufficiency of the Gospel dare not be made a test of orthodoxy.

7. We believe, teach, and affirm that whenever the Scriptures give us clear and certain testimony, we shall simply believe it and not argue. And we reject and condemn as contrary to the Word of God the belief that in view of "the perpetual aim of the Gospel" (AC, XXVIII.66 Latin version) apostolic directives for the church's life may be set aside.

We further reject and condemn as contrary to the Word of God the following:

- a. That it may be a viable option for a Lutheran theologian to deny the biological fact of the virgin birth as long as such denial would not destroy his faith in Christ or affect his Gospel proclamation.
- b. That it is a viable option to deny original sin as long as such denial does not affect the hub of a person's teaching regarding sin and grace.
- c. That we are not necessarily bound to accept as historical all the miracles of our Lord recorded in Scripture as long as we affirm that He could have done them, and as long as

we do not, by such denial, make it impossible to proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord.

- d. That since the question of the ordination of women into the pastoral office does not directly touch the Gospel, differing opinions need not and should not disturb the unity of our church body.
- e. That it is permissible to employ a method of Bible study which may qualify the authority of Scripture as long as the content of the Gospel is not denied.
- f. That it is permissible to hold that there are factual, theological and/or interpretive errors in the Bible so long as these errors do not undermine the truth and sufficiency of the Gospel.
- g. That for concord and peace in our church body it is enough if we are agreed on the content and meaning of the Gospel even though we hold differing views on the nature of the Bible, its inspiration, inerrancy, and authority.

Gospel and Scripture

ITEM 2 - MODERATE POSITION PAPER

Lutherans are a Gospel-centered, Bible-centered people. "Grace Alone" and "Scripture Alone" are Reformation-era mottos which, when defined by thorough Biblical and historical study, give Lutheran theology and Lutheran people a unique position within the Christian tradition.

"Grace Alone" points us to a God who is rich in mercy and who "out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." (Eph. 2:4-5) This is the Gospel, which in traditional Lutheran theology has often been known as the "material principle."

"Scripture Alone" conveys the Lutheran understanding of the Bible as the only rule and norm for faith and practice. This is the "formal principle" in our theology.

The Gospel and the Scripture do not oppose one another. They serve one another in the sense that our faith in the Gospel causes us to accept the truthfulness of the Bible; and the Bible in its entirety bears witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The formal and material principles are both rooted in Christ. They should be distinguished but never separated.

A controversy has arisen in our Synod concerning the relationship of these two, the Gospel and the Scriptures. Both contending parties are striving to safeguard what they consider to be an absolutely vital aspect of our heritage as Lutheran Christians.

In that process each party stresses certain principles to make its point. In the heat of controversy each party levels charges at the other which the accused considers to be excessive and unfair. But the charges at least help identify what each side considers to be the issues.

For example, one group is accused of denying the authority of Scripture by making the Gospel the "governing principle of our theology." They are charged with abolishing the principle of sola Scriptura by saying that "the Gospel gives the Scriptures their normative character, not vice versa." They are said to reduce the content of Christian belief to a minimum by discarding whatever does not, in their subjective judgment, serve the Gospel directly. In short, they are charged with using the Gospel against the Scriptures.

On the other hand, the other group is accused of using the Scriptures against the Gospel. They are charged with replacing faith in Jesus Christ with faith in the Bible. They are said to make an inerrant Book the basis of our faith and the guarantor of God's truth, thus detracting from the Gospel alone as the power of God for our salvation. They are said to use an approach to the Scriptures which centers in the intellectual acceptance of a collection of writings rather than in the search for God's message of Law and Gospel, thus obscuring a basic insight of Lutheran theology.

Our observation is that as representatives of these two parties talk to each other, they find that their differences are often a matter of emphasis, and that neither side has a corner on the truth. This does not mean that there are no issues in the Gospel-Scripture area but that these issues are difficult to isolate without caricaturing the position of others.

Most of the issues as we see them cluster around our definition of Scriptural authority. What is the nature of that authority, and on what is this authority based? What role does the Gospel play in the authority of Scripture? What implication does the centrality of the Gospel in our theology and life have for our approach to the Scriptures?

What follows is an attempt to articulate our convictions about both the Gospel and the Scriptures, and the relationship of the one to the other.

THESES AND COMMENTS ON THE GOSPEL AND THE SCRIPTURES

1. The Gospel is the Good News that God has made atonement for the sin of all people and overcome the power of death and Satan through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. It is a joyful Word which proclaims forgiveness of sins and a right standing before God on the basis of what He has accomplished in history, given freely to all who put their trust in Him.
2. "When the word 'Gospel' means the entire doctrine of Christ . . . then it is correct to say aright that the Gospel is a proclamation both of repentance and of forgiveness of sins." (FC, Ep, V, 6) In Lutheran theology the Gospel is proclaimed in relation to the Law. The Gospel always addresses itself to human sinfulness, rebellion against God, and failure to keep His commandments, all of which are revealed by the Law. God's Gospel announces salvation from our own corrupted nature and the temporal and eternal punishment of God.
3. This Gospel message, specifically the article of Justification by Faith, is "the chief article of the entire Christian doctrine," without which "no poor conscience can have any abiding comfort or rightly understand the riches of the grace of Christ." (Ap. Ger. IV, 2, 3)
4. As the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16), the Gospel reaches down from heaven and across the centuries and touches us where we are. With Luther we can say, "I believe that God has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature." The object of saving faith is the living, reigning Christ. Without this personal and contemporary dimension, the Gospel is merely past history.
5. At the core of the Gospel lies the historical once-for-all sacrifice and resurrection of Christ. That historical event can be proclaimed in a variety of ways. Before there was an established New Testament, the Gospel existed as the power of God and was transmitted by word of mouth in the teaching, liturgical worship and sacramental life of the earliest Christians. By the power of the Spirit the Gospel still works

among us in these and other ways. In the Smalcald Articles, III, iv, Luther says:

We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers counsel and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace: first, through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sin (the peculiar function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second, through Baptism; third, through the Holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys; and finally through the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren.

6. Although the Gospel works in many ways, all that we know of it comes ultimately from the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers are appraised and judged. (FC, Ep, Rule & Norm, 1) The confessors wrote, "We are certain of our Christian confession and faith on the basis of the divine, prophetic, and apostolic Scriptures." (Pref., Book of Concord, p. 12)
7. The Scriptures are the written Word of God. The internal testimony of the Bible assures us that God is speaking to us in the words originally given to His prophets and apostles. For this reason, "other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture." (FC, Epit, Sum, 2)
8. We accept the Scriptures as Word of God on account of our faith in the Gospel. Had not God first revealed Himself in his Son, the Bible would remain a dark and ineffectual book, even as the Old Testament was veiled to the Emmaus disciples until Christ **opened** it to them by showing how the Old Testament is fulfilled in him.
9. None of the attributes of the Scriptures, e.g. inspiration, inerrancy, clarity, uniqueness, efficacy, or unity, can be demonstrated scientifically. The affirmation of these attributes (however differently we may define them) flows from our faith in the Gospel.

The Authority of the Scriptures

10. All authority rests with God. His Son and Servant, Jesus, says "I can do nothing on my own authority . . . because I seek not My own will but the will of Him who sent Me." (John 5:30) The whole authority of God is given to His Son. (Matt. 28:18)
11. The Scriptures are authoritative because they are the Word of God. Lutheran theology distinguishes two aspects of that authority.
12. The causative authority of the Scripture lies in the power of its central message of Law and Gospel to bring about repentance and faith.
13. The normative authority of the Scripture regulates our faith and practice. All doctrines and teachers are measured by the Scripture.

14. We believe a third kind of authority is sometimes attributed improperly to Scripture, namely that it is a flawless source of information on all matters treated in it (e.g. geographic, cosmological, scientific, historical). This authority appears in effect to serve as the guarantee of the truth of the Gospel for many people. Fears are expressed that the Gospel will be lost, eventually if not now, if we are permitted to believe that the Scripture contains human deficiencies of any kind in its original text.

The Basis of the Authority of the Scriptures

15. As the Word of God, the Scriptures possess an objective authority independent of our recognition and appreciation of that authority. In the life of the believer and in the corporate life of the church, however, the Spirit-given power of the Gospel leads us to assert the Scriptures' authority.
16. Though the Scriptures are authoritative because they are the Word of God, we can accept and acknowledge that authority only as they lead us to Christ. As believers in Christ, joined to Him in Baptism, we believe that the Scriptures are a totally reliable rule for establishing and judging doctrine and practice. This authority is based on a totally reliable God, who fulfills His covenant promises to Israel and to us in the coming of the Word made flesh.
17. Thus every affirmation of the authority of Scriptures for us must have its basis in the Bible's central message, that God forgives our sins for Christ's sake.
18. Grounding the authority of the Bible in its attributes, particularly the attribute of inerrancy, is inconsistent with the testimony of the Scriptures themselves and fails to give honor to Christ, to whom all the Scriptures bear witness.

The Purpose of the Scriptures

19. Apology IV, 5, indicates God's purpose in giving us the Bible, namely to expose and condemn sin and to assure us of life and salvation in Christ, stating: "All Scriptures should be divided into these two chief doctrines, the Laws and the Promises."
20. The Scripture's own self-stated purpose helps us to understand their authority. That purpose is to lighten our darkness (Ps. 119:105); create saving faith and with it life in the name of Jesus (John 20:30); instill hope (Rom. 15:4); and teach, correct, and equip God's people for a life of good works (II Tim. 3:16). God's purpose in giving the Scriptures is the salvation and sanctification of mankind. His purpose therefore is integrally related to the Law and the Gospel, and the authority of the Scriptures invariably relates to the application of that Law and Gospel to our lives.

21. Neither the Scriptures nor the Confessions know of a purpose of God which is not salvific in the broadest sense. "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31) "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for His sake." (I John 2:12) "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." (I John 5:13)
22. The Scriptures nowhere claim a broader purpose, that is, the presentation of exact, inerrant information on matters totally unrelated to salvation, sanctification, God, or the human condition.
23. Accepting the Scriptures for what they intend and claim to be - God's message of sin and grace conveyed through the media of ancient languages and worldviews - we do not feel it necessary to prove the Bible's factual inerrancy on scientific or geographical matters or to harmonize those parts which seem to be at odds with one another. We see this as a subtly rationalistic way of sitting in judgment on God's Word.

The Gospel's Function in the Interpretation of Scripture

24. The Gospel is the center of the Scriptures and the key which "opens the door to the entire Bible." (Ap IV, 2-3) We must attempt to relate everything in Scripture to the Gospel. This is not only a soundly Lutheran theological judgment but also a commonplace among Biblical interpreters, namely, that every text be related to the various levels of its context.
25. The Christian - because he has been redeemed by Christ and lives in the Spirit - cannot read Scripture texts independently of the Gospel of Christ.
26. A flat reading of Scripture passages without relating them to the Gospel threatens to turn the Bible into a book of laws, moralisms, and proof texts.
27. In dealing with doctrinal questions or differences, the Christian's first concern is a pastoral one: "Where does my brother stand with Jesus Christ? And what does his understanding of a given question do to his relationship to Christ?"

"Gospel Reductionism"

28. The term "Gospel reductionism" is a polemical term of recent coinage and has been used with various meanings. Inasmuch as slogans caricature rather than describe the position of others, the term "Gospel reductionism" is of questionable value in responsible theological discussion.
29. If the term is to be injected into the conversation, "Gospel reductionism" can and ought to be understood in a positive and Lutheran way. "Reducere" means "lead back." Scripture is to be understood in the light of the Gospel. Doctrinal formulations are to be made in the

light of the doctrine: justification by faith. Thus Melancthon argued against the Romanist method of Biblical interpretation which ignored the Gospel and issued into a doctrine of work righteousness. He believed that every passage, even passages dealing with good works (where nothing of the Gospel is mentioned), must be "led back" to the justification of the sinner, the Gospel. Certain questions ought to be asked: "How does this text show man's need for God?" "How does it reveal God's love for man?" "How do these directives from Jesus, Peter, or Paul flow from the Gospel message?"

30. The fact of the Gospel's centrality in the Scriptures does not allow us to reject arbitrarily any part of the Bible which we judge to have nothing to do with the Gospel.
31. We reject the accusation that insistence on the centrality of the Gospel for both the authority and understanding of the Scriptures "reduces to a minimum the (doctrinal) content of the Christian faith." When we say that "the Gospel gives the Scriptures their normative character," we are saying that it is the Scriptures that are normative, that they are normative in all matters of faith and life, and that they become normative for us in this way because of their central message, the Gospel.
32. We further reject the allegation that consistent reference to the Gospel in connection with questions of historicity, authorship of Biblical books, and the like, indicates a willingness to tolerate false doctrine under the guise of "the freedom of the Gospel." That phrase, "the freedom of the Gospel," has a precious meaning for us all. It refers to God's highest gift of grace, freedom from sin and the curse of the law. (Romans 6 and 7; Galatians 3) The freedom of the Gospel is not license to do as we please, least of all to reject any part of God's Holy Word in Scripture. But the centrality of the Gospel in our theology and in our lives inevitably prompts us to make the first question, whenever someone is suspected of teaching contrary to Scripture: "How does this affect his relationship to Christ?" "How does his statement of a given doctrine relate to the doctrine of the Gospel?" Until we have arrived at the answers to those questions, we are not willing to say that his opinion "cannot be tolerated in the church of God."

The Historical-Critical Method

33. The historical-critical method "is in essence the application to Scripture of the principles of historical research and of literary criticism." As such, its purpose is to understand the text and not to challenge its authority as Word of God.
34. Lutherans may use the historical-critical method without destroying the authority of God's written Word; that is, they may use the techniques and tools developed by historical criticism without accepting the presuppositions or conclusions of everyone who uses the method.

35. Inasmuch as Lutheranism does not operate with an official exegesis, responsible brothers and sisters in the faith may differ with regard to the form and meaning of certain texts or with regard to the exact human process by which our Bible was produced, without endangering the articles of faith in the Lutheran Church.
36. "Technical questions involved in interpretation which neither aid nor impair the right understanding of the Gospel (in its fullest sense) ought not to become a matter of controversy in the church" (CTCR, A Lutheran Stance . . .). The questions in the present controversy are matters of definition and interpretation, not doctrine.
37. We reject the "domino theory" popularized by opponents of historical-critical study. Literary or historical theories concerning the development and form of a text do not endanger the Gospel. We believe the domino theory betrays a lack of trust in the promises and power of God, as though a parabolic interpretation of Jonah somehow erodes the certainty of the resurrection of Christ. The domino theory ignores the Spirit-given, self-sustaining authority and reality of the Gospel in the life of the Christian.

The Gospel and Unity in the Church

38. The unity of the church - and any church body - is a gift from above: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. Our Augsburg Confession says, "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments." (VII, Latin) To set other, extra-biblical, extra-confessional, non-doctrinal criteria for unity within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod detracts from the sufficiency of the Gospel and the Sacraments. It is as if we are saying, "We Missourians need more than these things which God has given us."
39. "Christian fellowship can be nourished and sustained only by the Gospel, which created it." (CTCR, Theology of Fellowship, p. 10, note many references, and also its exegesis of Rom. 16:17-18 on p. 25 where "offenses contrary to the doctrine" is understood as offenses contrary to the Gospel)
40. Absence of dissent and adherence to bylaws and other human traditions, while in most cases sincerely to be desired, do not create unity in the Biblical sense. The attempt to do with regulations what can only be accomplished through the Gospel is a form of legalism.
41. Differences of interpretation and definition (e.g. on "inerrancy") which do not alter articles of faith ought not be destructive of fellowship and peace within our Synod, among people who in faith share a common commitment to the Gospel, the Sacraments, the Scriptures, and the Lutheran confessional tradition.

Gospel and Scripture

ITEM 3 - CONSERVATIVE RESPONSE TO MODERATE POSITION PAPER*

Summary Statement

A. Specific Issues

1. a. The Moderate Caucus believes that Christians may differ in their understanding and definition of inspiration, inerrancy, clarity, uniqueness, efficacy, and unity of Scripture, without endangering our doctrine of Biblical authority.

b. The Conservative Caucus denies this and believes that all of these attributes of Scriptures are essential to the teaching of the correct Biblical doctrine concerning Scripture's authority.

2. a. The Moderate Caucus is willing to say that all of Scripture is reliable as it teaches Law and Gospel.

b. The Conservative Caucus believes in the total authority and inerrancy of Scripture in all matters which Scripture speaks of or touches upon.

3. a. The Moderate Caucus believes in the authority of Scripture, even though they affirm that Scripture may err.

b. The Conservative Caucus believes that any meaningful and Lutheran doctrine concerning Biblical authority entails also the inerrancy of Scripture (factual inerrancy).

4. a. The Moderate Caucus believes that harmonization of Biblical passages and pericopes which appear to conflict with each other is "a subtly, rationalistic way of sitting in judgment on God's Word."

b. The Conservative Caucus believes that such attempt at harmonization is fully in accord with the hermeneutical principles of the clarity and unity of Scripture.

5. a. The Moderate Caucus, when dealing with a person who denies the authority of Scripture or undermines it by false teaching, believes that the first question to be asked is "Where does my brother stand with Jesus Christ?"

b. The Conservative Caucus, while certainly concerned with the spiritual condition of a false teacher, believes that a prior consideration and concern is whether the erring brother is Biblical or not and is misleading God's people. Our first concern is to the word of God, as we deal with false doctrine in the Church.

*See Appendix 1 for Explanation of Conservative Format and
Appendix 2 for Moderate Caucus Evaluation of the Report of the ACDC.

6. a. The Moderate Caucus believes that the historical-critical method is completely compatible with the authority of Scripture.

b. The Conservative Caucus believes that the historical-critical method, as it is ordinarily defined and used by the overwhelming number of scholars today, is inimical to the authority of Scripture and denies the divine origin of Scripture, the unity of Scripture, the inerrancy of Scripture, and other attributes which Scripture possesses as God's Word.

7. a. The Moderate Caucus does indeed teach that Scripture is the norm for the theology we teach in the church today, including our Gospel preaching. The Moderate Caucus also says that the Scriptures are authoritative because they urge Christ upon us. They thus base the authority of Scripture on its content, not upon its origin, namely that it comes from God.

b. This position, which probably leads to Gospel Reductionism, is rejected by the Conservative Caucus which holds and teaches that the authority of Scripture, whether it teaches Law or Gospel or whatever subject it may touch upon, derives from its divine origin and not from its content. The Conservative Caucus believes that the Moderate Caucus equivocates on the whole matter of the definition of Biblical authority.

B. General Points

1. The Moderate Caucus seems to have been unable to transcend equivocation in its treatment of the relationship of the Gospel to Scripture and its authority. They rightly say that Scripture owes its authority to its divine origin, but in many other contexts, they make the Gospel--and this means very likely their own understanding of the Gospel as they elicit it from the Scripture--to be normative in the interpretation of Scripture, and this to the degree that Biblical assertions may be questioned by the Gospel as they understand it.

2. In several contexts, (Paragraphs 9, 18, 22, 41) the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture which has been so universally held in the church catholic through its history and was so firmly believed within our own Synod is questioned or misrepresented or glossed-over as unimportant, unclear and unnecessary. The inescapable conclusion which one must reach from such a cavalier treatment or failure to treat seriously the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, is that the Moderate Caucus simply does not hold to the doctrine as it has been held in our church through its history. This fact is brought out with even greater clarity and pathos by other documents constructed by both the Moderate and Conservative Caucuses. But the fact had to be mentioned at this point also, since this failure to believe, teach, and confess the divine inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture seems to impinge upon practically every controversy and to be at least in part responsible for every aberration which is present in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod today.

Response in Detail

INTRODUCTION

Concerning the introductory paragraphs leading up to the theses and comments of the Moderate Caucus, we have only two comments to make. First, we object to the Moderate Caucus not calling Scripture a source of faith and practice as well as a rule and norm for faith and practice. It is important to denote Scripture, not only as a norm which judges all teachers and teachings but as "The pure and clear fountain of Israel." (FD, Rule and Norm 3) As "The pure and clear fountain of Israel" Scripture is the only source from which we gain any knowledge today of God, of what he has done for us in Christ or of the Gospel itself, Scripture then is the source for the Gospel that we teach as well as the norm for our teaching in the church.

Lutherans are a Gospel-centered, Bible-centered people. "Grace Alone" and "Scripture Alone" are Reformation-era mottos which, when defined by thorough biblical and historical study, give Lutheran theology and Lutheran people a unique position within the Christian tradition.

"Grace Alone" points us to a God who is rich in mercy and who "out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ." (Eph. 2:4-5). This is the Gospel, which in traditional Lutheran theology has often been known as the "material principle."

"Scripture Alone" conveys the Lutheran understanding of the Bible as the only rule and norm for faith and practice. This is the "formal principle" in our theology.

The Gospel and the Scripture do not oppose one another. They serve one another in the sense that our faith in the Gospel causes us to accept the truthfulness of the Bible; and the Bible in its entirety bears witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The formal and material principles are both rooted in Christ. They should be distinguished but never separated.

A controversy has arisen in our Synod concerning the relationship of these two, the Gospel and the Scriptures. Both contending parties are striving to safeguard what they consider to be an absolutely vital aspect of our heritage as Lutheran Christians.

In that process each party stresses certain principles to make its point. In the heat of controversy each party levels charges at the other which the accused considers to be excessive and unfair. But the charges at least help identify what each side considers to be the issues.

For example, one group is accused of denying the authority of Scripture by making the Gospel the "governing principle of our theology." They are charged with abolishing the principle of sola Scriptura by saying that "the Gospel gives the Scriptures their normative character, not vice versa." They are said to reduce the content of Christian belief to a minimum by discarding whatever does not, in their subjective judgment, serve the Gospel directly. In short, they are charged with using the Gospel against the Scriptures.

On the other hand, the other group is accused of using the Scriptures against the Gospel. They are charged with replacing faith in Jesus Christ with faith in the Bible. They are said to make an inerrant Book the basis of our faith and the guarantor of God's truth, thus detracting from the Gospel alone as the power of God for our salvation. They are said to use an approach to the Scriptures which centers in the intellectual acceptance of a collection of writings rather than in the search for God's message of Law and Gospel, thus obscuring a basic insight of Lutheran theology.[36]

The Conservative Caucus believes that the preceding two paragraphs in the introduction are very well put and clearly state the point at controversy. The charge against moderates in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is that they are abolishing the principle of Sola Scriptura by saying that "the Gospel gives the Scriptures their normative character, not vice versa." This statement taken from "Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord" is clearly still the position of the Moderate Caucus and Moderates in the Missouri Synod, although precisely what is meant by it is not always clear. As the words stand, they represent false doctrine and in themselves are a denial of the authority of Scripture. The following paragraph in which Conservatives are accused of using Scriptures against the Gospel seems to be very clearly the continued contention of the Moderate Caucus, although Conservatives categorically deny such a caricature as descriptive of their position. Conservatives insist that norming our Gospel teaching and preaching in the church by Scripture (which is done also by the Apostle Paul and our Lord Himself) is not using Scripture against the Gospel.

Our observation is that as representatives of these two parties talk to each other, they find that their differences are often a matter of emphasis, and that neither side has a corner on the truth. This does not mean that there are no issues in the Gospel-Scripture area but that these issues are difficult to isolate without caricaturing the position of others.

Most of the issues as we see them cluster around our definition of Scriptural authority. What is the nature of that authority, and on what is this authority based? What role does the Gospel play in the authority of Scripture? What implication does the centrality of the Gospel in our theology and life have for our approach to the Scriptures?

What follows is an attempt to articulate our convictions about both the Gospel and the Scriptures, and the relationship of one to the other. [37]

1. Definition of the Word Gospel

The Gospel is the Good News that God has made atonement for the sin of all people and overcome the power of death and Satan through the life, death and resurrection of His Son. It is a joyful word which proclaims forgiveness of sins and a right standing before God on the basis of what He has accomplished in history, given freely to all who put their trust in Him. [37]

At the core of the Gospel lies the historical once-for-all sacrifice and resurrection of Christ. That historical event can be proclaimed in a variety of ways. Before there was an established New Testament, the Gospel existed as the power of God and was transmitted by word of mouth in the teaching, liturgical worship and sacramental life of the earliest Christians. By the power of the Spirit the Gospel still works among us in these and other ways. In the Smalcald Articles, III, iv, Luther says:

"We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers counsel and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace: first, through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sin (the peculiar function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second, through Baptism; third, through the Holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys; and finally through the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren." [37f]

We agree.

2. Gospel In Its Broad Sense

"When the word 'Gospel' means the entire doctrine of Christ . . . then it is correct to say aright that the Gospel is a proclamation both of repentance and of forgiveness of sins." (FC, Ep, V, 6) In Lutheran theology the Gospel is proclaimed in relation to the Law. The Gospel always addresses itself to human sinfulness, rebellion against God, and failure to keep His commandments, all of which are revealed by the Law. God's Gospel announces salvation from our own corrupted nature and the temporal and eternal punishment of God. [37]

As the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:26), the Gospel reaches down from heaven and across the centuries and touches us where we are. With Luther we can say, "I believe that God has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature." The object of saving faith is the living, reigning Christ. Without this personal and contemporary dimension, the Gospel is merely past history. [37]

In the light of Moderate tendencies throughout our Synod to deny the historicity of certain events recorded in Scripture or to minimize the importance of the historicity of these events, the Conservative Caucus believes that it would have been much wiser for the Moderates in this paragraph to say that "the object of saving Faith is the living, reigning Christ of history" or some expression to note that the saving works of Christ were actual deeds carried out in history. The Gospel, as the Moderates say, is not "merely" past history, but it most certainly is past history.

The Scriptures are the written Word of God. The internal testimony of the Bible assures us that God is speaking to us in the words originally given to his prophets and apostles. For this reason, "other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture." (FC, Epit, Sum, 2)
[38]

The reference to the introductory phrase "for this reason" in the third sentence is not clear. Are "other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, not to be put on a par with Scripture" (SD, Epit, Rule and Norm 2) because Scriptures are the written word of God or because of the internal testimony which God speaks to us therein? Our Confessions are clear on the answer to this question: It is for the first reason.

3. Centrality of the Gospel

This Gospel message, specifically the article of Justification by Faith, is "the chief article of the entire Christian doctrine," without which "no poor conscience can have any abiding comfort or rightly understand the riches of the grace of Christ." (Ap. Ger. IV, 2, 3) [37]

The Gospel is the center of the Scriptures and the key which "opens the door to the entire Bible." (Ap IV, 2-3) We must attempt to relate everything in Scripture to the Gospel. This is not only a soundly Lutheran theological judgment but also a commonplace among Biblical interpreters, namely, that every text be related to the various levels of its context. [40]

It is perhaps a pious overstatement from the Moderate Caucus which says: "We must attempt to relate everything in Scripture to the Gospel." This is really very difficult and probably impossible to do, if we are to observe the canons of historical and grammatical exegesis. It is hardly "a commonplace among Biblical interpreters" today, most of whom are not Lutheran and make no attempt to relate everything in Scripture to the Gospel. How, for instance, does one relate the Proverbs of Solomon to the Gospel except to say that they are not Gospel?

The Christian - because he has been redeemed by Christ and lives in the Spirit - cannot read Scripture texts independent of the Gospel of Christ. [40]

The Conservative Caucus agrees wholeheartedly with this statement concerning the relationship of the Gospel of Christ to our reading of the Scriptures.

A flat reading of Scripture passages without relating them to the Gospel threatens to turn the Bible into a book of laws, moralisms, and proof texts. [40]

This statement, which repeats what was said before, is not quite clear. Is the Moderate Caucus speaking out against "proof texts"? Certainly our Lord and His Apostles used a "proof text" method as they applied the Old Testament to their day and drew their theology out of it. Again, although the Bible is not in itself a book of laws, there are certainly laws in the Bible. Whether we relate all passages to the Gospel or not, they are simply there.

4. Scripture

We accept the Scriptures as Word of God on account of our faith in the Gospel. Had not God first revealed Himself in his Son, the Bible would remain a dark and ineffectual book, even as the Old Testament was veiled to the Emmaus disciples until Christ opened it to them by showing how the Old Testament is fulfilled in Him. [38]

The Scriptures are authoritative because they are the Word of God. Lutheran theology distinguishes two aspects of that authority. [38]

The Conservative Caucus agrees with this statement as it stands. The objective basis for the authority of Scripture is the fact that it is the Word of God, not that it contains the Gospel. In later theses, the Moderate Caucus seems to equivocate on this matter.

Though the Scriptures are authoritative because they are the Word of God, we can accept and acknowledge that authority only as they lead us to Christ. As believers in Christ, joined to Him in Baptism, we believe that the Scriptures are a totally reliable rule for establishing and judging doctrine and practice. This authority is based on a totally reliable God, who fulfills His covenant promises to Israel and to us in the coming of the Word made flesh. [39]

It is worthy of note that the Moderate Caucus speaks of Scripture as being totally reliable for establishing and judging doctrine and practice, although not necessarily reliable in all of their assertions and utterances. The implication is that there is some norm perhaps within the norm of Scripture, or outside, which informs us what in fact are matters of

doctrine and practice. Actually all Scripture pertains to doctrine (Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16).

Thus every affirmation of the authority of Scriptures for us must have its basis in the Bible's central message, that God forgives our sins for Christ's sake. [39]

This statement is again unclear and gratuitous. Why must every affirmation of Biblical authority have its basis in the central message that God forgives our sins for Christ's sake? What is the proof of this assertion? Are there not many large sections of Scripture which do not deal with God's forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, and yet we can affirm their authority?

Grounding the authority of the Bible in its attributes, particularly the attribute of inerrancy, is inconsistent with the testimony of the Scriptures themselves and fails to give honor to Christ, to whom all the Scriptures bear witness. [39]

This statement of the Moderate Caucus is both unclear and misleading. To our knowledge, no one "grounds" the authority of the Bible in its attributes. However, one cannot define or speak intelligently about what the authority of the Bible is unless one knows what attributes the Bible possesses. Certainly an essential element of the authority of the Bible is its inerrancy. To speak of an authority of Scripture which contains errors is both an absurdity and a blasphemous position to take. Furthermore, the authority of the Bible itself is an attribute which is derived from its divine origin and grounded in it as the Moderate Caucus has conceded. Is the Moderate Caucus trying to say that to believe in the inerrancy of the Bible fails to give honor to Christ? If so, we wish they had said so clearly. We do not agree with such a position. We say that we give the proper honor to Christ when we believe what He believed concerning the Scriptures, and He believed in their inerrancy. When Jesus cites the Scripture or uses them, there is never hesitancy or embarrassment or evasion or qualification. He simply says "It is written," or He quotes a prophet, or He says that Scripture says; and then what follows is unconditionally true. One simply cannot understand Christ's usage of Scripture apart from His conviction that Scripture is inerrant. Christ accepted the entire historical framework of the Old Testament. He calls His disciples fools and slow of heart not to believe all that the prophets have spoken (Luke 24:25). He tells us that Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35), that not one jot or tittle shall pass from the Scriptures (Matt. 5:18, 19). To the Sadducees He says "Do ye not therefore err because ye know not the Scriptures?" (Mark 12:24) The implication is that they will not err when they know the Scriptures; and that because Scriptures do not, we honor Christ by affirming the authority of Scripture. We dishonor Him if we deny this inerrancy.

5. Biblical Authority and Doctrinal Differences

In dealing with doctrinal questions or differences, the Christian's first concern is a pastoral one: "Where does my brother stand with Jesus Christ? And what does his understanding of a given question do to his relationship to Christ?" [40]

The Conservative Caucus disagrees with the position stated in paragraph 27. The first concern when dealing with doctrinal questions or differences is not "where does my brother stand with Jesus Christ," important and fundamental as that question may be. Our first concern is whether we are being faithful to God and His Word. And another concern, just as great as that of a brother pastor or Christian, is with the sheep who are listening to a brother pastor who may be teaching them false doctrine and leading them into noxious pastures.

6. Interpretation (Gospel Reductionism)

The term "Gospel reductionism" is a polemical term of recent coinage and has been used with various meanings. Inasmuch as slogans caricature rather than describe the position of others, the term "Gospel Reductionism" is of questionable value in responsible theological discussion. [40]

If the term is to be injected into the conversation, "Gospel Reductionism" can and ought to be understood in a positive and Lutheran way. "Reducer" means "lead back." Scripture is to be understood in the light of the Gospel. Doctrinal formulations are to be made in the light of the doctrine: justification by faith. Thus Melancthon argued against the Romanist method of Biblical interpretation which ignored the Gospel and issued into a doctrine of work righteousness. He believed that every passage, even passages dealing with good works (where nothing of the Gospel is mentioned), must be "led back" to the justification of the sinner, the Gospel. Certain questions ought to be asked: "How does this text show man's need for God?" "How does it reveal God's love for man?" "How do these directives from Jesus, Peter, or Paul flow from the Gospel message?" [40f]

The fact of the Gospel's centrality in the Scriptures does not allow us to reject arbitrarily any part of the Bible which we judge to have nothing to do with the Gospel. [41]

We reject the accusation that insistence on the centrality of the Gospel for both the authority and understanding of the Scriptures "reduces to a minimum the (doctrinal) content

of the Christian faith." When we say that "the Gospel gives the Scriptures their normative character," we are saying that it is the Scriptures that are normative, that they are normative in all matters of faith and life, and that they become normative for us in this way because of their central message, the Gospel.

We further reject the allegation that consistent reference to the Gospel in connection with questions of historicity, authorship of Biblical books, and the like, indicates a willingness to tolerate false doctrine under the guise of "the freedom of the Gospel." That phrase, "the freedom of the Gospel," has a precious meaning for us all. It refers to God's highest gift of grace, freedom from sin and the curse of the law (Romans 6 and 7; Galatians 3). The freedom of the Gospel is not license to do as we please, least of all to reject any part of God's holy Word in Scripture. But the centrality of the Gospel in our theology and in our lives inevitably prompts us to make the first question, whenever someone is suspected of teaching contrary to Scripture: "How does this affect his relationship to Christ?" "How does his statement of a given doctrine relate to the doctrine of the Gospel?" Until we have arrived at the answers to those questions, we are not willing to say that his opinion "cannot be tolerated in the church of God." [41]

The same might be said with regard to the Moderate Caucus's discussion of "Gospel Reductionism." The overarching question for the Moderate Caucus in the entire matter of Biblical interpretation seems to be not, "what does the Scripture say?" which was Paul's basic question, but "how does this text show Man's need for God, and how does it reveal God's love for Man?" To the Moderates such questions are of prior importance to the question of the meaning of the text. This particular hermeneutical approach, taken from just one almost parenthetical statement in our confessions, the German translation of Apology 4, Paragraph 2, seems to be clearly at odds with the entire history of exegesis as it was carried out by the reformers and since then in the Lutheran Church. It is this "flat" approach of Scripture itself, that is, the authority of the text of Scripture in every given case. This is the reason why questions of historicity, authorship, and the like are often of little importance to the Moderates, because they cannot relate such questions to the prior hermeneutical question which they impose upon exegesis and the entire theological enterprise. The fact that they actually apply such a criterion, also to one suspected of teaching contrary to the Scripture, betrays their utter commitment to this principle. Of such a person they do not ask "Does he teach according to the Scriptures?" but rather, "How does his teaching affect his relationship to Christ?" and "How does his statement of the given doctrine relate to the doctrine of the Gospel?" Certainly this makes the Gospel, or one's understanding of it, a norm above Scripture. And the fact that they will not condemn one who teaches contrary to Scripture until they have answered to their own satisfaction how that person's doctrine relates to "The doctrine of the

of the Gospel" simply undergirds our conclusion, namely that "Gospel Reductionism" as carried out by the Moderates, is in fact an undermining of the authority of the Biblical text as such.

It is therefore self-contradictory that they should write:

Although the Gospel works in many ways, all that we know of it comes ultimately from the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers are appraised and judged. (FC, Ep, Rule & Norm, 1) The confessors wrote, "We are certain of our Christian confession and faith on the basis of the divine, prophetic, and apostolic Scriptures" (Pref., Book of Concord, p. 12). [38]

7. Total Authority of Scripture

None of the attributes of the Scriptures, e.g. inspiration, inerrancy, clarity, uniqueness, efficacy, or unity, can be demonstrated scientifically. The affirmation of these attributes (however differently we may define them) flows from our faith in the Gospel. [38]

This statement of the Moderate Caucus is quite unclear. Although the attributes of Scriptures may not be able to be demonstrated scientifically, they most certainly can be demonstrated. Clarity, inerrancy, efficacy, unity are certainly demonstrable attributes. They are demonstrable exegetically, and they are certainly demonstrable by the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. The acceptance of these attributes may well flow from our faith in the Gospel, but the affirmation of these attributes flows from our exegesis of the Bible itself and from legitimate conclusions drawn from the nature of Scripture as God's Word. The fact that the Moderate Caucus appears to disregard or despair of any uniform definition of these attributes is very troublesome for the achieving of any unity among us. For instance, Lutherans have generally identified the efficacy of Scripture with the power of the Gospel itself. Will the affirmation of such an attribute of Scripture then flow from faith in the Gospel which is found in the Scriptures themselves? Such confusion results from reluctance to define terms.

All authority rests with God. His Son and Servant, Jesus, says "I can do nothing on my own authority . . . because I seek not My own will but the will of him who sent me." (John 5:30) The whole authority of God is given to His Son (Matt. 28:18). [38]

This statement should have made clear that the Son of God became a servant and should have made clear that the authority of God was given to His Son according to the human nature.

The causative authority of the Scripture lies in the power of its central message of Law and Gospel to bring about repentance and faith. [38]

The normative authority of the Scripture regulates our faith

and practice. All doctrines and teachers are measured by the Scripture. [38]

We believe a third kind of authority is sometimes attributed improperly to Scripture, namely that it is a flawless source of information on all matters treated in it (e.g. geographic, cosmological, scientific, historical). This authority appears in effect to serve as the guarantee of the truth of the Gospel for many people. Fears are expressed that the Gospel will be lost, eventually if not now, if we are permitted to believe that the Scripture contains human deficiencies of any kind in its original text. [39]

Since the days of Lutheran Orthodoxy, Lutherans have spoken about the causative authority (or power) of Scripture, and the normative authority of Scripture as source and norm of our doctrine. The Conservative Caucus emphatically rejects any kind of third authority or even second authority to the normative authority of Scripture. It also rejects the caricature to be found in paragraph 14 of the Moderate Caucus statement. That Scripture is a "flawless source of information on all matters treated in it (e.g. geographic, cosmological, scientific, historical)" is a corollary of its authority which is both divine and inerrant. If the Moderate Caucus wishes to reject this position which represents that of historical Lutheranism, it has thereby rejected the authority of Scripture itself. What the Moderate Caucus seems to be rejecting in paragraph 14, is precisely the position of the Brief Statement of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. There can be no danger in accepting what is true about the Scriptures, namely that they are a flawless source of information on those matters which they speak of.

As the Word of God, the Scriptures possess an objective authority independent of our recognition and appreciation of that authority. In the life of the believer and in the corporate life of the church, however, the Spirit-given power of the Gospel leads us to assert the Scriptures' authority. [39]

The Conservative Caucus concurs with the position that the Scriptures possess an objective authority due to their nature as the Word of God. However, it must be stated that the position of the Moderate Caucus which says that the "Spirit-given power of the Gospel" leads us to accept Scripture's authority, is less than clear. One can hear the Gospel and be touched by its power without ever knowing that there is a Scripture. Can one be led to assert the authority of Scriptures apart from the effect of Scriptures themselves? When Lutheran theology has spoken about the self-authenticating power of Scripture, it is speaking about the Gospel in Scripture which leads us to assert Scripture's authority. Perhaps this is what the Moderate Caucus had in mind, but they do not state the point very clearly.

Apology IV, 5, indicates God's purpose in giving us the Bible, namely to expose and condemn sin and to assure us of life and salvation in Christ, stating: All Scriptures should be divided into these two chief doctrines, the Laws and the Promises." [39]

The Scripture's own self-stated purpose helps us to understand their authority. That purpose is to lighten our darkness (Ps. 119:105); create saving faith and with it life in the name of Jesus (John 20:30); to instill hope (Rom. 15:4); and teach, correct, and equip God's people for a life of good works (II Tim. 3:16). God's purpose in giving the Scriptures is the salvation and sanctification of mankind. His purpose therefore is integrally related to the Law and the Gospel, and the authority of the Scriptures invariably relates to the application of that Law and Gospel to our lives. [39]

Neither the Scriptures nor the Confessions know of a purpose of God which is not salvific in the broadest sense. "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31) "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his sake." (I John 2:12) "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." (I John 5:13) [40]

The Scriptures nowhere claim a broader purpose, that is, the presentation of exact, inerrant information on matters totally unrelated to salvation, sanctification, God, or the human condition. [40]

Accepting the Scriptures for what they intend and claim to be - God's message of sin and grace conveyed through the media of ancient languages and worldviews - we do not feel it necessary to prove the Bible's factual inerrancy on scientific or geographical matters or to harmonize those parts which seem to be at odds with one another. We see this as a subtly rationalistic way of sitting in judgment on God's Word. [40]

We agree with the Moderate Caucus concerning the purpose of Scripture and of the importance of knowing this purpose, (Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16; John 20:31), in order to read and understand the Scriptures aright. But the purpose of Scripture to bring us to faith in Christ and to an eschatological hope in no way conflicts with the fact that Scripture, in order to bring about this purpose, tells us a history unerringly and presents facts authoritatively. The Moderates seem to imply that there is someone in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who teaches that the Scriptures have as a purpose to give "inerrant information on matters

totally unrelated to Salvation, Sanctification, God, and the human condition." This is a fictitious heterodoxy which no one in our circles has ever held, and we wonder if this heterodoxy was invented because Moderates are not comfortable with our historic position concerning the inerrancy of Scripture. It is highly questionable whether God's message of sin and grace is conveyed through the media of ancient "world views" as asserted by the Moderate Caucus. That the Scriptures use ancient language terminology is one thing; that they use false and heathen world views to present the message of sin and grace, is quite another. We do not believe that the Moderate Caucus has proved this point or that it can be proved. We reject also the statement of the Moderate Caucus that we are not to harmonize parts in the Bible which seem to be at odds with each other. Why not, if Scripture is in agreement with itself and if the analogy of Scripture is a necessary and useful hermeneutical rule? To say that such harmonization "is a subtly, rationalistic way of sitting in judgment on God's Word" is a devious and cruel accusation to make against the attempts of the church catholic for hundreds of years to understand and apply the Biblical message of Salvation.

The historical-critical method "is in essence the application to Scripture of the principles of historical research and of literary criticism." As such, its purpose is to understand the text and not to challenge its authority as Word of God.[41]

Lutherans may use the historical-critical method without destroying the authority of God's written Word; that is, they may use the techniques and tools developed by historical criticism without accepting the presuppositions or conclusions of everyone who uses the method. [41]

Inasmuch as Lutheranism does not operate with an official exegesis, responsible brothers and sisters in the faith may differ with regard to the form and meaning of certain texts or with regard to the exact human process by which our Bible was produced, without endangering the articles of faith in the Lutheran Church. [42]

"Technical questions involved in interpretation which neither aid nor impair the right understanding of the Gospel (in its fullest sense) ought not to become a matter of controversy in the church" (CTCR, A Lutheran Stance. . .). The questions in the present controversy are matters of definition and interpretation, not doctrine. [42]

These paragraphs are probably unnecessary to the entire discussion of the Moderate Caucus on the subject "The Gospel and the Scriptures," for the historical critical method is discussed elsewhere by this same Caucus. Suffice it to say here that paragraph 33 does not give a correct definition of the historical critical method. Certainly the definition of the historical critical method as usually defined and practiced does

not take into account challenging or not challenging the authority of Scripture as the Word of God. Paragraph 34 simply begs the question and assumes that the "techniques and tools" developed by historical criticism don't have sub-Christian presuppositions, an assumption which was contrary to the known fact. The statement in paragraph 35 that Lutheranism does not operate with official exegesis is misleading, to say the least. Certainly the exegesis in the seventh article of the Formula of Concord is binding, whether one wants to call it "official" or not, and so is the exegesis which the Moderates themselves cite in Article 4 of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, leading to our doctrine of justification by faith. It is the differences of exegesis which leads to differences of doctrine and leads to schism and heresy in the church and certainly endangers the articles of faith. It is utter naivete in the light of the facts of church history to discount this observation.

We reject the "domino theory" popularized by opponents of historical-critical study. Literary or historical theories concerning the development and form of a text do not endanger the Gospel. We believe the domino theory betrays a lack of trust in the promises and power of God, as though a parabolic interpretation of Jonah somehow erodes the certainty of the resurrection of Christ. The domino theory ignores the Spirit-given, self-sustaining authority and reality of the Gospel in the life of the Christian. [42]

It is tragic to observe the Moderate Caucus rejecting the so-called domino theory and thus rejecting the lessons of almost two thousand years of church history. Luther said, "In Philosophy a very small error in the beginning is very serious in the end. So also in theology, a very little error, overturns the whole doctrine . . . doctrine is like a mathematical point. It cannot be divided, that is, you cannot take away from it or add to it . . . therefore, doctrine must be one continual round golden ring in which there is no break; if even the least break occurs, the circle is no longer perfect." (WA 40, II, 46ff.) Luther believed in the domino theory for both theological and historical reasons. His attack against Erasmus on the freedom of the will emanated from his insight into the fact that a false anthropology threatens the very heart of the Gospel, justification by faith in Christ alone. When the Moderate Caucus goes on to say that literary or historical theories concerning the development and form of a text do not endanger the Gospel, this again is a gratuitous declamation. Any theory concerning the development and form of the Biblical text which undermines the divine authority of Biblical assertions most certainly does endanger the Gospel itself, since that Gospel is normed by nothing else than the divinely authoritative Scriptures. The last statement of this paragraph, which accuses those who are afraid that small errors may grow into big ones, of ignoring the "spirit-given, self-sustaining authority and reality of the Gospel in the life of a Christian," sounds perilously like enthusiasm. (Schwaermerei)

8. Unity of the Church

The unity of the church - and any church body - is a gift from above: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and God and Father of us all. Our Augsburg Confession says, "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments." (VII, Latin) To set other, extra-biblical, extra-confessional, non-doctrinal criteria for unity within The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod detracts from the sufficiency of the Gospel and the Sacraments. It is as if we are saying, "We Missourians need more than these things which God has given us." [42]

The Moderate Caucus confuses the issue of unity entirely when it identifies the "Unity of the Church" (AC, VII) and "Unity within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod." The unity of the church (AC, VII) is that oneness that all believers have in Christ (Ephesians 4). The unity, or concord (agreement), we strive for in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (see F.C., X) is a unity of doctrine (I Cor. 1:10). The Conservative Caucus rejoices that the Moderate Caucus rejects extra-Biblical, extra-Confessional, non-doctrinal criteria to achieve either the oneness of the Una-Sancta or the concord in doctrine urged upon us by Scripture.

"Christian Fellowship can be nourished and sustained only by the Gospel, which created it." (CTCR, Theology of Fellowship, p. 10, note many references, and also its exegesis of Rom. 16:17-18 on p. 25 where "offenses contrary to the doctrine" is understood as offenses contrary to the Gospel)[42]

The Moderate Caucus misunderstands Romans 16:17. When Paul warns against those who caused divisions and offenses against the doctrine he is speaking of the entire doctrine of the Gospel in a broad sense, i.e. the entire teaching of Christ.

Absence of dissent and adherence to bylaws and other human traditions, while in most cases sincerely to be desired, do not create unity in the Biblical sense. The attempt to do with regulations what can only be accomplished through the Gospel is a form of legalism. [42]

The Conservative Caucus is delighted that the Moderate Caucus affirms that bylaws and other traditions do not create the oneness of the church. The Conservative Caucus also agrees that it would be a horrible form of legalism to try to accomplish with human regulations what only the Gospel can do, namely create faith. In an evangelical church bylaws and regulations are constructed to serve the Gospel, and to break agreed-to bylaws and regulations is very often a sin against the law of love and hampers the work of the Gospel.

Differences of interpretation and definition (e.g. on "inerrancy") which do not alter articles of faith ought not be destructive of fellowship and peace within our Synod, among people who in faith share a common commitment to the Gospel, the Sacraments, the Scriptures, and the Lutheran confessional tradition. [42]

To speak of differences of interpretation and definitions of inerrancy as not altering articles of faith is to affirm that inerrancy is not an article of faith. To say that such differences "ought not be destructive of fellowship" is to say that it does not matter what a person believes regarding inerrancy. Such a position smacks of indifferentism which is unworthy of our Moderate brethren and makes serious theological discourse impossible.

Gospel and Scripture

ITEM 4 - MODERATE RESPONSE TO CONSERVATIVE POSITION PAPER

A

Our brothers of the other caucus have correctly stated that the controversy in the Gospel-Scripture area concerns the nature of Biblical authority.

We believe it to be entirely misleading, however - and indicative of the real problem among us - to insist that the issue on which we differ is whether the Scripture is our authority or not.

Those among us who are accused of subverting or denying Scripture's authority have given repeated testimony to their total commitment to Scripture's authority. Furthermore, they have indicated their unconditional acceptance of every article of faith set forth in the Lutheran Confessions because these doctrines are drawn from the Scripture.

Yet this testimony is viewed with suspicion or rejected outright. They are told, "You say you accept the authority of Scripture, but the way you interpret the Scripture, the way you relate it to the Gospel, may lead to a denial of some fundamental doctrine."

When the charge is repeated often enough that some among us do not accept the Scriptures as their sole authority, a good many people begin to believe it. An atmosphere of suspicion is created. Instead of listening people begin accusing. And then the whole function of the church as a fellowship in which people can edify one another is destroyed.

This truly is an issue among us. The issue is: how do God's people deal with differences of understanding with regard to the sacred Scriptures? The issue related to the doctrine of the Church. How can the members of Christ's Church build each other up instead of tear each other down?

None of us is free from guilt in this matter. We all tend to caricature the position of people we disagree with. But we believe that in this matter of Scriptural authority, the sincere testimony of brothers and sisters in the faith has been ignored or rejected. This is contrary to the way the Body of Christ is to function. (I Cor. 1:10 - 4:21; 12:1-31; Eph. 4:1 - 5:21; Col. 3:12-17)

B

What is the issue regarding Scriptural authority? The issue has to do with the definition of "authority."

We define "authority" as it is understood in Article II of our synodical constitution. To accept Scripture as our authority means to accept Scripture without reservation "as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice."

To say that Scripture is our sole authority is to say that Scripture is unique as God's revealed Word through His specially chosen and inspired writers. All other writings, traditions, and decrees of councils and conventions must be subordinated to it.

We believe that an issue has arisen in the area of Scriptural authority because a different view of authority has found its way into our Synod. For some, Scripture's "authority" has come to mean its power to exercise jurisdiction because of its perfect character as a book. In this view Scripture is an authoritative source of information on all matters it contains (including the Gospel) because God has given it to us in a flawless form.

This idea of authority makes certain assumptions of reason about the way God inspired men to write. It operates with certain a priori ideas about the Bible's inerrancy. That is, this view of Scripture's authority starts with certain opinions of what the Scripture must be before looking at the Scripture itself.

There are many variations of this view among us, but in the minds of many "submitting to Scripture's authority" has come to mean "taking the Bible as it reads." "God has spoken clearly, and we are to believe and not argue."

There is a sense in which this is a valid statement. But this view becomes false when "arguing with the Bible" is applied to the work of those who wrestle with exegetical questions such as those to be found in the opening chapters of Genesis or in the apostolic directives of the epistles of Paul. And the view we are describing becomes downright ~~demonic~~ when those who hold it label as "Bible doubters" people who wrestle with such exegetical questions.

We accept the Scriptures as our authority (our norm for faith and life) because we believe they are the Word of our Lord and Savior, and He has called us to faith in Him by the Gospel. Our submission to God's Word is not dependent on certain logical assumptions about Scripture's inerrant character nor on certain rational ideas about the literal or figurative character of portions of the Biblical text.

We certainly agree that Scripture is "authoritative on all matters on which it clearly speaks." In this conviction we Lutherans have systematically set down in our confessional writings what we believe to be clearly taught in the Scriptures. We bind ourselves to these teachings because we believe they are the teachings of Scripture.

But this acceptance of Scripture's authority, and this confession of Lutheran doctrine based on clear Scripture, has always taken into account the fact that God chose to give us His Word through human beings who lived at a specific time in history and who used literary styles and forms familiar to them. Respect for the Scriptural Word demands that we accept Scripture as God has given it to us and strive to interpret the Bible according to the best insights God provides.

The most learned Scriptural scholar may have the "faith of a child" in God as his Father and submit obediently to the Word He speaks in Scripture. At the same time the scholar may also recognize the complexities of the Scriptural text and search diligently to understand the text better.

We cannot help expressing our grave concern about basing our view of Scriptural authority on anything but faith in God. If we agree (and we do) that "our view of the Scriptures is a result of our faith in the Gospel," then to insist on anything else as necessary for accepting Scripture's authority is wrong.

We believe many of our people exhibit a strong tendency to base their acceptance of the truth of the Gospel on the inerrancy of the Bible. This is not a Lutheran view but is the kind of rationalism that finds fertile ground among us also.

We must therefore guard against promoting the view that unless a person holds to a particular view of inerrancy or a particular definition of inspiration, he subverts the authority of Scripture. We repeat: Accepting this authority is a matter of faith in God, not a matter of rational proof.

C

Our brothers agree with us that the Gospel is the heart and center of Christian teaching. They warn, however, against using this emphasis to "relativize the rest of the Scriptures."

If "relativizing the Scriptures" means feeling free to change or reject arbitrarily anything that is not directly related to the good news of God's action in Jesus Christ, then we agree. This does not show proper respect for the Bible as the Word of God, nor is it sound Biblical scholarship. On the other hand, that some matters in the Bible are more important than others is certainly true, and the importance of any matters presented in Scripture can be determined only by seeing them in relation to the Gospel.

To say that Scripture is an errorless source of information even in matters peripheral to its message of Law and Gospel (e.g. the number of casualties in Israel's battles) is inconsistent with the Scripture's own testimony about its purpose. We do not assume that anything in the Bible is unimportant or to be treated lightly. But we do have to relate everything in the Scriptures ultimately to the Gospel as Scripture's center. This principle enables us to understand the Bible and helps determine the relative significance of a given part of Scripture for our faith and teaching.

In following this principle we are following the lead of our Lord Himself. He showed His critics that no matter how much they searched the Scriptures, they missed its meaning unless they saw and accepted its witness to Him. (John 5:39-40)

This "Gospel principle" does not determine hermeneutical questions such as whether a given passage is to be taken literally or figuratively or what to do with parallel accounts which do not harmonize. Those questions must be explored on the basis of competent Bible scholarship, and Bible students may legitimately hold different views on various questions without affecting "the heart and center of Christian teaching," the Gospel.

D

We again want to express joyfully our agreement with what our brothers say along with our confessing fathers, namely that the Scriptures are the Word of God, written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and are the basis of our confession of faith.

We have repeatedly expressed to our brothers on this committee our agreement that the concept of "inspiration" must be related to the content of the Scriptural Word, that it is "God-breathed."

To say that inspiration must also be related to the purpose and power of the Scriptures regarding our salvation is, we believe, entirely Scriptural and vital to the understanding of inspiration.

We are puzzled and dismayed, then, that our brothers state as an issue and condemn (!) the view that "inspiration of the Word pertains to the effective power of the Scriptures to bring men and women to salvation through the Gospel."

If they take issue with this as the sole implication of "inspiration," then we can agree that it is incomplete. But how can we have an adequate understanding of inspiration without this aspect of it, and how can this view be condemned?

St. Paul goes to great lengths in I Corinthians 1 and 2 to assure his readers that his message, spoken and written, is a message "inspired" by God the Holy Spirit. He identifies himself in 1:1 as an apostle of Christ Jesus, called by the will of God. He was sent to preach the Gospel of the cross of Christ, which is the secret and hidden wisdom of God, and which God alone can reveal to us through the Spirit. (2:2, 7, 10) Paul received the Spirit of God, which enabled him to understand the gifts given to him by God, and he imparted God's message in words taught him by the Spirit. (2:12-13) That message is the very power of God. (1:18) Paul's speech was a demonstration of the Spirit and power, leading people to faith in God. (2:45)

In other words the activity of the Holy Spirit in moving Paul to proclaim Jesus Christ and Him crucified has as its purpose the salvation of Paul's hearers. Paul spoke God's Word, and God's Spirit was active in that word to save those who believed. (Romans 1:16-17)

Likewise, Jesus promised to send the Spirit to His disciples, and that Spirit of truth would bear witness to Jesus, and the disciples would also be witnesses. (John 15:26-27) When the Spirit came He would guide the disciples into all the truth and He would glorify Jesus. (John 16:13-14) All this activity of the Spirit was to equip the disciples to go into the world with the Word of truth. (John 17:17-18) The disciples received the Spirit as Jesus breathed on them and were commissioned to forgive and retain sins, all so that people might ultimately be saved. (John 20:21-23)

The whole purpose of "inspiration," then, is to bring to people the Word of life, the Gospel, which is God's power to save. Only the word which is God's Word can have God's power. Only He can give that Word. And He has given it to us through His apostles and prophets in Holy Scripture.

Inspiration certainly does pertain to "the unique operation of God's Spirit in connection with the writing of the Holy Scriptures" (and in connection with the oral proclamation of God's message by the prophets and apostles as well). But at the same time we cannot separate the process of inspiration from its purpose and its power.

That purpose, as we have seen above, was to bear witness to Jesus Christ so that He might be glorified and people might be saved. The one Scripture text which uses the word "inspiration" ties the activity of the Holy Spirit to a purpose, namely, "salvation through faith in Christ Jesus," which purpose includes teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness. (II Tim. 3:1-16) By inspiration of the Spirit the apostles and prophets give us the Word of God by which we are born anew. (I Peter 1:23-25)

Thus we affirm most emphatically that the Scriptures themselves show that the inspiration of the Word also pertains to the effective power of the Scriptures to bring men and women to salvation through the Gospel.

This is the very point Luther makes in the citation listed by our brothers from the Smalcald Articles. (III, viii) In viii.3 Luther says: "We must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit of grace except through or with the external Word which comes before." Luther was inveighing against the enthusiasts who boasted that they possessed the Spirit without and before the Word. No, said Luther, God gives His Spirit through the external Word.

That is exactly what we want to convey when we say that because the Holy Spirit inspired the Word of God in the Scriptures, that external Word is a living Word and able to bring people to salvation.

E

Another issue delineated is whether "apostolic directives for the church's life may be set aside" in view of "the perpetual aim of the Gospel."

The latter phrase is taken from the Augsburg Confession. (XXVIII.66) The confessors were contending against the idea that "in Christendom one must have services of God like the Levitical or Jewish services and that Christ commanded the apostles and bishops to devise new ceremonies which would be necessary for salvation." (61)

St. Paul, they said, directed in I Cor. 11:5 that women should cover their heads in the assembly. But no one would say that a woman commits a sin if without offense to others she goes out with uncovered head. (54-56) Thus bishops cannot burden consciences with regulations about Sunday and other ordinances.

In the apostolic decrees of Acts 15:23-29 the apostles directed that the people of the church should abstain from blood and what is strangled. We do not sin, said the confessors, if we fail to observe this decree today, because the purpose of the decree was to avoid giving offense. The overriding principle here is that we must "pay attention to the chief article of Christian doctrine," which is the Gospel. (65-66)

That principle is precisely the one we want to follow today. The words of Scripture which give us apostolic directives for the church's life are the Word of God, and they must be treated as such. We may not arbitrarily set anything aside. However, we do make judgments about what is applicable to the church's life today, just as the confessors did. And in so doing we must follow the same principle they did, namely, to ask, "How can we carry out Christ's mission consistent with His Gospel?"

F

Our response to the seven points listed at the end of our brothers' document is as follows:

1. The Virgin Birth of Jesus is an article of faith confessed in the ecumenical creeds of the Holy Christian Church as well as the Lutheran Confessions. Denying this doctrine places a person outside the bounds of orthodoxy.
2. Original sin is an article of faith defined in the Lutheran Confessions and thus is not an "optional" teaching.
3. We accept the events recorded in the Gospels, including the miracles of Jesus, as a true testimony and account of the life and work of our Lord. Interpreters differ in some cases in explaining discrepancies between accounts or the form of a given account, and we do not believe people should be bound to a given theory of explanation as the only one possible. But we accept the account of the miracles of our Lord as part and parcel of God's infallible Word.

4. The question of the ordination of women does touch the Gospel, and that is why it has become a point of controversy. This matter is an illustration of the issue discussed under "E" above. The question becomes one of whether the apostolic directives concerning women in the church were meant to be inflexible regulations for all time or were meant to apply to the specific situation of the early church "for a time to avoid offense" (AC XXVIII.66), or whether they apply to what we today term "ordination" at all. We believe that in searching earnestly as all of us are for the best way to proclaim the Gospel today, the disagreement over this question of the ordination of women should not divide us.
5. The phrase "qualify the authority of Scripture" admits of various understandings. We reject the contention that historical-critical methodology as practiced by the former faculty majority of the St. Louis Seminary qualifies the authority of Scripture in a way different from any other method of Bible study.
6. We do not hold that there are theological or interpretive errors in the Bible. What is in the Scriptures is the theology and interpretation that God moved His sacred spokesmen to give us. What is in the Scriptures is the Word of God, and it is true. The Scriptures as God has given them to us and preserved them for us do contain factual discrepancies which all responsible Bible students acknowledge. (Cf. "A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles," IV-F; and "Report on Dissent from A Statement," CTCR, September 1974, pp. 20-21) The word "error" as commonly understood often implies some essential unreliability or untrustworthiness on the part of the thing described, and for this reason we do not believe it is an appropriate term to apply to the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures. In any case, if our faith is rooted in the Gospel of Christ, the truth of which is not dependent on "inerrancy," then the recognition of such discrepancies in Scripture in no way affects that faith.
7. For concord and peace in our church body we do need to agree on the nature of the Bible. But we may not bind one another to any definitions of that nature, including its inspiration, inerrancy, and authority, which are not found in the Scriptures themselves. We do not achieve concord and peace by making decisions on these matters by majority vote and then imposing those definitions on our membership as the only ones permissible.

PART C - HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD

ITEM 1 - MODERATE POSITION PAPER

Definition of Historical Criticism

The historical critical method is essentially the application to Scripture of the principles of historical research and of literary criticism. This method is concerned with the setting of a document, its sources, and the events discussed or implied by the document. The historical critical method seeks to do justice to both the "human side" of Scripture as well as (at least within the church) to its "divine side."

One noted conservative scholar has written: "'Criticism,' as we would define the term, does not mean sitting in judgment on the Bible as the Word of God. Criticism means making intelligent judgments about historical, literary, textual, and philological questions which one must face in dealing with the Bible, in the light of all the evidence available, when one considers that the Word of God has come to men through the words of men in given historical situations."¹

Scripture is addressed to man, the whole man, heart, soul, and mind. Through Scripture the Holy Spirit brings us the deeds and words of God and so creates faith in us. While faith "sees" and "hears," the language of Scripture is also perceived through eye and ear and mind. Biblical criticism (discriminating appreciation) is one mode of the mind's response to this address, for sooner or later the mind must answer certain questions: What is the nature of this document which is addressed to me? In what circumstances was it written? From what time? By or through whom? With what intent?

There are many definitions of the historical critical method, but all of them presuppose the use of the principle of analogy in modern historical investigation. Contemporary exegetes are well aware that this principle itself must be subjected to rigorous criticism: "If an event is reported in the tradition, the fact that there is no immediate analogy between it and our everyday experience of reality is insufficient grounds for denying that it happened . . . The absolutization of the principle of analogy will shrink the possibilities of historical knowledge as well as remove the historical basis of faith."² Those scholars who absolutize the principle of analogy have a man-centered (anthropocentric) view of history, but we can thank God that among us historical criticism has been used by people who truly believe that God is the center and goal of history and that God has acted decisively in history for our salvation.³

In using the term "historical criticism" we should be careful to point out the many philosophies of history (for example, idealism, positivism, existentialism), each with certain strengths and weaknesses. Idealist historians like von Ranke looked for the spirit who moves through history. Positivism tried to turn history into a science in which the search for "causes" and "laws" was the sole and proper occupation of the

investigator. Existentialist historians often seem concerned with "meaning" to the exclusion of establishing "fact." While this is not the place to decide which philosophy of history is most adequate in the late 20th century, we call this important issue to the attention of our readers to remind them that the relationship between fact and meaning will vary depending on one's philosophy of history. It is no surprise, then, that historical critics and historical grammaticists come up with results that exhibit differences not only between the two schools, but within each as well.

Because of the great variety of definitions and underlying philosophies we can speak most meaningfully on this issue if we examine historical criticism as practiced in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Just as advocates of the historical grammatical method object to the charge of bibliolatry, although this seems to be practiced by some fundamentalists who use the historical grammatical method, practitioners of the historical critical method within the Synod rightly object to the charge of skepticism or rationalism though that charge seems to apply to certain non-Christian historical critics.

Sometimes the historical grammatical method is described as "literal" and the historical critical method as "figurative." We believe this is a misunderstanding. Actually both methods are committed to taking the text seriously as it stands and either method may discover literal or figurative elements.

Basic elements or "steps" in the method

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) listed the following as basic and legitimate elements of the so-called historical-critical method:

1. Establishing the text.
2. Ascertaining the literary form of the passage.
3. Determining the historical situation.
4. Apprehending the meaning which the words had for the original author and hearer or reader.
5. Understanding the passage in the light of its total context and of the background out of which it emerged.⁴

In 1970, the exegetical department of Concordia Seminary listed the following techniques as characteristic of the historical critical method:⁵

1. Linguistic study, to determine the meaning of the words and sentence constructions for the original author.
2. Textual criticism, to establish as nearly as possible the reading of the text after its latest significant redaction.

3. Form criticism and stylistic study, to ascertain the genre of composition to which the unit belongs and the elements of prose or poetic style which characterize it. This aids in understanding the author's intent, by bringing out both the typical and the unique features of form and style in comparison with other texts.
4. Study of the setting, to determine both the typical situation in the life of the people that would characterize any text of its genre and also, if possible, the specific historical occasion which gave rise to the individual text under study.
5. Tradition history, to trace the transmission and development of the motifs or clusters of motifs from their origin to their appearance in the text under study. Comparative materials from outside the Bible may prove helpful either as analogies or as actual sources. Such a study can often significantly clarify not only the ideas of a text but also the intended impact on the initial hearers.
6. Redaction history, to reconstruct the process by which the materials of the text under study were combined with other materials and edited until the book reached its canonical form. The evangelists, for example, often arranged their materials more according to themes than chronology, as can be seen in the five great discourses in Matthew, the Prologue of Luke (1:1-4), or the structure and content of John. This "editorial activity" was, of course, done by the power of the Holy Spirit and should be included in any discussion of the nature of inspiration.

It is difficult to understand how the Bible could be studied responsibly today without using some form of these exegetical steps. To the extent that "historical grammarians" use these steps they expose themselves to a crucial methodological problem. If they explain the picture of the cosmos in the Old Testament (geocentric view, with flat earth and hard sky) as mere figurative language, they are making a form critical judgment, which may even be contrary to the view of the biblical authors themselves. In addition, once historical grammarians make this form critical judgment, they are hard pressed to demonstrate methodologically why it is wrong to take other passages, such as Genesis 1 or Jonah, figuratively if such a judgment is based solely on the text itself (internal literary criteria), the immediate context, or the general context, and not on anti-supernatural bias.

The History of Interpretation in the Church

In its long history the church has used many methods of interpreting the Sacred Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit has been able to work graciously through them all. This variety is seen in the New Testament itself, which sometimes employs an allegorical method (Galatians 4), a rabbinic method (I Cor. 10, including the Jewish tradition that the rock struck by Moses followed the Israelites through the desert), a typological method (Romans 5:14),

a paradoxical method toward interpreting the law (compare Mt. 5:17-18 and Mt. 19:7-9), and, of course, throughout the New Testament, a Christocentric interpretation of the Old Testament (e.g. Romans 10:5-10).⁶

Later methods include the Antiochene school of exegesis (literal or historical, influenced by Aristotle) and the rival Alexandrian school (allegorical, mystical, influenced by Platonic philosophy); the fourfold sense most medieval exegetes expected to find in every passage of the Scriptures; and the various 'historical' methods (including the historical critical and historical grammatical) since the Reformation. Experience has shown that no method is without its perils and that no method guarantee that an exegete will infallibly disclose all the facets of God's intended message.⁷ Each method in some way reflects the philosophical and religious insights of its day. The CTCR was badly mistaken in 1973 when it told the church that for more than eighteen centuries the Christian Church answered all exegetical questions in a manner sufficiently consistent to make it possible to speak of a clearly identifiable traditional position, the historical-grammatical view.⁸

The Legitimacy of the Historical-Critical Method

"In and of itself so-called 'historical critical' methodology is neutral . . . (When used with Lutheran Presuppositions, of course, the historical critical method loses its neutrality and becomes a tool in the service of Lutheran theology. We would say the same thing of the exegetical method of Luther or of the historical grammatical method.) Part of our present problem lies in the fact that some of us remember that the opponents of Christianity were among the first to make extensive use of historical criticism to call the church's faith and the church's Scriptures into question. We have at the same time tended to forget that in other situations other foes of Christianity have used other methods of interpretation to try to refute and ridicule the Church's faith." (At the famous Scopes trial, for example, Clarence Darrow used a literal reading of the text to mock the Biblical record).

"Basically all the techniques associated with 'historical critical' methodology . . . are legitimated by the fact that God chose to use as His written Word human documents written by human beings in human language. That is, He employed human forms of communication to disclose to human beings what they need to know and believe about God and about His will for the salvation of all human beings. Because of the wealth of information about the biblical milieu we are privileged to possess, 'historical-methodology provides us with valuable insights into the intended meaning of the written Word of God as we have it. Neither the Sacred Scriptures nor the Book of Concord enjoins a particular method as the only way of interpreting the Scriptures. When we use 'historical critical' methodology, we do so on the basis of Christian pre-suppositions.⁹ So employed, it has brought great blessings to the Church and deepened the Church's appreciation of the written Word of God."¹⁰

Practitioners of the historical critical method within the Missouri Synod have always given the method only qualified approval. When asked whether the Lutheran Stance document gives unqualified approval to the "historical-critical" method, the CTCR replied: "No, the document has offered guidelines for the Church's proper use of the historical-critical method."¹¹

Presuppositions of Biblical Interpretation

The following have been offered over the years in the Missouri Synod as necessary presuppositions, assumptions, or guidelines for biblical study within a confessional Lutheran context.

- A. All members of Synod "accept without reservation":
 - 1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice;
 - 2. All the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God."¹²
- B. In its excellent "Lutheran Stance" document, the CTCR offered the following presuppositions:
 - 1. "As Christians we come to the interpretation of Holy Scripture in the assurance of our baptism as the event from which we derive our new nature and perspective . . . By God's grace we have been given the power to interpret the Scriptures and to know Christ, which is impossible without the Holy Spirit."
 - 2. We affirm our unconditional loyalty and commitment to the inspired Scriptures as the written Word of God.
 - 3. We pray that the Lord . . . will continually enable us to stand with trembling awe and holy joy before the God Who addresses us in both judgment and mercy through the Biblical Word.
 - 4. We express our praise to Almighty God for all new information and fresh insights into Scripture . . . in recent times as well as throughout history.
 - 5. Since the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired source and norm of all Christian preaching and teaching, we hold ourselves committed to the diligent and unremitting study of the written Word through the responsible use of every appropriate means and method that God has provided as an aid to our understanding of the Scriptures.

6. In hearty agreement with the Lutheran Confessions we affirm that the right understanding of the Gospel (including the proper distinction of Law and Gospel as grounded in the article of justification) is the key that finally unlocks the meaning of Sacred Scripture (Apology, IV, 2-5, German; FC, SC, V, 1) . . . We also hold that those technical questions involved in interpretation which neither aid nor impair the right understanding of the Gospel (in its full sense) ought not become a matter of controversy in the church (cp. Apology, VII, 20f.: FC, SD, Summary 15) . . .
- C. The faculty majority of Concordia Seminary (now in exile), echoed these ideas when they wrote:

"As Lutherans, however, we operate with certain pre-suppositions when we approach the Scriptures. These include: 1) the centrality of the Gospel in the Scriptures; 2) the distinction between the Law, which always accuses, and the Promise, which always assures; 3) the Spirit's gift of faith as the pre-requisite to receive the promise and obey the commandments of God."¹⁴

And the exegetical department distinguished themselves from other scholars when they stated:

"There have admittedly been historical critics who practiced the methodology with presuppositions differing from ours. Certain scholars, for example, have come with a very skeptical world view and have allowed little or no room for God and faith. Some seem to have taken delight in promoting novelties and opposing all traditional views.

We are not such men. It is not the historical-critical method in itself that brings men to such positions, but the presuppositions with which they begin. The 'criticism' which we practice is motivated by presuppositions of faith and is intended to discern clearly among the various levels and possibilities in the situations being studied. Our ultimate evaluation of the results obtained by this critical methodology arises not from the methodology itself but from our presuppositions, which are those of faith in God through Christ rather than those of pure naturalism, skepticism, or any other world view."¹⁵

These same sentiments come through in the following:

"We are not merely historical critics, but we are first of all baptized Christians and ordained pastors, committed to the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. These presuppositions and commitments, including our ordination vows, make us decisively

different."¹⁶

Necessary Controls

In its Lutheran Stance document, the CTCR suggested the following controls which still seem appropriate and valid:

1. The authoritative Word for the church today is the canonical Word, not precanonical sources, forms, or traditions -- however useful the investigation of these possibilities may on occasion be for a clearer understanding of what the canonical text intends to say.
2. The "literary form" of the text . . . is only a clue to understanding, not a criterion of truth. Moreover, the Christian interpreter reckons with the fact that God in His revelation may both modify conventional literary modes, even radically, and also create unique modes without analogy in other literature.
3. The Christian interpreter . . . cannot adopt uncritically the presuppositions and canons of the secular historian. In his use of historical techniques the interpreter will be guided by the presuppositions of his faith in the Lord of history. It is indeed true that Christian faith rightly sees in the historicalness of God's redemptive work . . . a divine warrant for the use of 'secular' means and methods in the study of His Word, including linguistic, literary, and historical analysis of the texts. But at the same time faith recognizes that there is more to history than can ever be adequately measured by 'laws' derived exclusively from empirical data and rational observation.
4. The necessary effort to hear a text of Scripture first of all in its particularity, its meaning "then and there," must be balanced by an equal effort to hear the text both in its integral relation to all the rest of Scripture and in its meaningfulness for all who hear it today. This effort does entail above all a firm grasp of the essential unity of both Testaments, Old and New, and of their common witness to the one Truth that is as relevant now as when it was first proclaimed.
5. Whatever cognizance needs to be taken of the connection between Biblical materials and their background in the whole complex of social, cultural, political, economic, and religious factors of their day, a clear distinction must nevertheless be maintained between the unique, divine, and revelatory character of Scripture and the sheer human and contingent character of Scripture's earthly milieu . . . There is a qualitative difference between the inspired witness of Holy Scripture in all its parts and words and the witness, explicit or implicit, of every other form of human expression.¹⁷

Others have offered the following similar cautions:

"The question of 'how far' is an important one. Even if the Lutheran Confessions as taken seriously did not provide a sufficient answer to these problems, two major criteria may be advanced: (1) that of presuppositions . . . and (2) by their fruits shall ye know them, that is, any application must be rejected which results in simple moralism, a denial of the basic historical matrices of the revelation, a relativization of all truth, etc If the method is thus used conservatively, we feel certain that no doctrines of the Lutheran Church will be at stake Any hermeneutics may be abused (the ancient literalism just as much as the contemporary historico-critical method); we shall continue to insist on correct use, as always."¹⁸

Areas of Agreement/Disagreement on the Nature of the Scriptures and their Interpretation

- 1) All sides in the present controversy affirm the authority of the Holy Scriptures as the very Word of God.

The Bible's authority flows both from the fact that it is God's speech and from its Law-Gospel center -- these bases of course are intimately related to one another. "Gospel and Scripture" will form a separate document, but the following must be noted here:

- a) The authority of Scripture is causative, that is, it produces faith through the preaching of the Gospel (or convicts of sin by preaching the Law) and it is normative (sole rule and norm of faith and practice). One difficulty in the current crisis is the attempt by conservatives to isolate a third "authority": the Bible is authoritative on "everything on which it speaks," including history, geography, and science. Note that this authority on "the things" incidentally included in the Bible is never treated in the Confessions, in our ordination vows, nor in Scripture itself, and that an opinion on it is finally irrelevant to faith since we believe in Jesus Christ our Lord because we have been called by the Gospel. The danger in all this is not so much that conservatives have ignored the findings of modern historians and archeologists (although this has sometimes been true), but that it presupposes the "domino" theory, namely, that if the Bible were "wrong" (by our modern scientific standards!) in one place the whole structure of the faith would crumble. If we follow this argument carefully, we find that it makes the

authority of the Gospel of God dependent on human efforts to validate it. It is our belief and confession that the Scriptures do not lie to us, but they point us to Christ without fail and serve as the norm for our doctrine and life.

- b) Scripture is authoritative because it is God's Word and because of its central message. Sometimes moderates have not adequately expressed this "both/and" situation although they have been correct in maintaining that the Gospel is at the center of the authority question. Since natural man cannot accept the authority of Scripture but first must be won to Christ through the Gospel, it is only for those in the faith that the Bible has authority, at least functionally.

2) All sides agree that the Bible is the Word of God and the word of men.¹⁹

Implicit in the present controversy is the fear of conservatives that the moderates deny the Bible as Word of God and the fear of moderates that conservatives deny the Bible as word of men. If either assertion about the Bible were to be denied, great damage would result. Our intellectual grasp of the divine-human character of the Bible is at best partial and subject to constant correction. The human side of Scripture has become clearer with the rise of historical criticism, and this has raised new problems. But we should be using the gifts God has given us to probe more deeply into these problems rather than squandering our gifts by pitting one partial understanding against another.

On the human level Scripture is to be interpreted like any literary document, but at the same time it is God's Word and hence to be interpreted in ways different from any other literature. Because of this paradoxical fact, the rules of Biblical exegesis cannot be made as rigid or precise as the methodological rules for mathematics, physical sciences, and the like. What needs to be stressed is that our view of the Scriptures, both as to their divine and human qualities, should be derived directly from the Scriptures themselves. We have no right to rationalize away the human side in order to defend the divine side. Nor have we a right to rationalize away the divine side in order to stress the human.

3) All sides agree that Scriptures is its own interpreter.

This does not mean, of course, that there is no need for exegetes. Rather this slogan has been used and should continue to be used in three ways:

- a) Since the Bible is its own interpreter the central administration of the church does not function as the sole interpreter, as was true in medieval Roman Catholicism and which threatens

to become true in the Missouri Synod.

- b) The dark passages are to be interpreted by the clear. On the linguistic level this is a truism and need not be discussed further here.
- c) On a deeper level "Scripture as its own interpreter" and "clear passages interpreting the dark" refer to a much more important item: The Gospel center gives us the clue to understanding those parts of Scripture which do not seem to express the saving message with complete clarity. Lutherans, for example, have used the Pentateuch and prophets as an interpretive key for understanding the wisdom books in the Old Testament and Paul's letter to the Romans to understand James.

4) All sides agree on the Sola Scriptura principle.

For the church in its public teaching the Holy Scriptures are the only rule and norm. (FC, SC, Tappert, p. 505, par. 9) The Bible is the authority superior to all tradition, superior even to the creeds and confessions. "Sola Scriptura" means the denial of the claims to absolute authority by councils, popes, bishops, or synodical conventions. Conservatives have at times claimed "sola scriptura" as a reason for not using the historical critical method. They believe that the latter places reason above Scripture and thus deprives Scripture of its "sola" position. Moderates agree with the destructive effects that would result if reason were elevated above Scripture, but moderates fear that such rationalism takes place precisely when conservatives insist that the Bible's standards of historicity and facticity must conform to our own, when the Scriptures themselves make no such claim. In addition moderates sometimes detect an "anti-intellectualism" in the conservative position, which does not take adequate account of the legitimate role our minds play in understanding the words, thoughts, and history recorded in the ancient text.

5) All sides agree that the Old Testament must be understood in the light of the New.

Because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, everything has been changed, and we now know God much more fully than His Old Testament people did. (Heb. 1) We now can see clearly that the only answer to man's fall into sin is God's gift of forgiveness, life, and salvation in His Son. Conservatives sometimes neglect the fact that Jesus is both the complete fulfillment of God's Word in the Old Testament AND its ultimate interpretation. The promised messiah, for example, is often described in nationalistic and even martial terms in the Old Testament, but God kept this promise by sending His Son to create a whole new people that transcends lines of nation, race, and sex.

This Son renounced force by surrendering His own life for our sakes on the cross. To insist that the New Testament use of an Old Testament passage must be the literal or historical grammatical understanding of the Old Testament passage is to neglect the variety of exegetical methods employed in the New Testament which we briefly outlined above.

- 6) All sides agree that the Bible is inspired and totally reliable.

This thesis will be treated more fully in the section on Inspiration and Inerrancy.

Conclusion

How can we best minister to all of Christendom in theological scholarship--by rejection of the generally accepted method of historical criticism? Or by showing through responsible Biblical scholarship how this method and others can be useful for those who employ them with adequate Christian presuppositions and controls.

We believe that careful use of historical criticism within the Missouri Synod has opened to us fresh insights into God's Word, and we categorically deny once more, that practitioners of the method within the Synod have denied such doctrines as the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection of our Lord, or Original Sin.

Footnotes

1. G. E. Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapid. 1967), p. 37. See also Martin H. Scharlemann and Horace Hummel, "Notes on the Valid Use of the Historico-Critical Method," 1958, reprinted 1963.
2. Carl E. Braaten, *History and Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia. 1966), pp. 45-46.
3. We do not deny, of course, that some practioners of historical criticism outside the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have rejected facts or doctrines that we hold to be essential. These aberrations, however, can be attributed either to inadequate use of the method or to the rationalistic or evolutionistic presuppositions of the scholars in question.
4. *A Lutheran Stance Toward Contemporary Biblical Studies*, CTCR, p. 9.
5. "Statement on Exegetical Methodology," adopted by the Exegetical Department of Concordia Seminary, Now in Exile, December 9, 1970.
6. Robert Grant. *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (New York, 1963), chapters 2, 3, and 4.
7. The above two paragraphs are a slightly expanded version of Faithful to our Calling, Faithful to our Lord, I, p. 40.
8. Convention Workbook, 1973, p. 435. This entire document, "A Comparative Study of Varying Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation," consistently misrepresents the facts with regard to historical criticism. The Moderate Caucus of the ACDC fails to find much use for this CTCR document in the present discussion.
9. These Christian presuppositions are considered necessary also by many outside The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. At the ecumenical study conference, held in Oxford from June 29th - July 5th, 1949, historical critical scholars such as C. H. Dodd, W. Eichrodt, Anders Nygren, Alan Richardson, and G. E. Wright stated the following as "necessary theological presuppositions of Biblical Interpretation":
 - a) It is agreed that the Bible is our common starting point, for there God's Word confronts us . . .
 - b) It is agreed that the primary message of the Bible concerns God's gracious and redemptive activity . . . In this the Bible's central concern, an authoritative claim is placed upon man and he is called to respond in faith and obedience throughout the whole of his life and work.
 - c) It is agreed that the starting point of the Christian interpreter lies within the redeemed community . . .

- d) It is agreed that the centre and goal of the whole Bible is Jesus Christ . . .
 - e) It is agreed that the unity of the Old and New Testament is not to be found in any naturalistic development . . . but in the on-going redemptive activity of God in the history of one people . . . etc.
- 10. Faithful to our Calling, I, p. 41. Bracketed items added by the Moderate Caucus.
 - 11. Answers to Questions Raised Regarding the Document "A Lutheran Stance . . .", p. 2. Adopted by the CTCR, Sept. 28, 1967.
 - 12. Article II of the Constitution of the LCMS.
 - 13. A Lutheran Stance, p. 8.
 - 14. Faithful to our Calling, I. p. 40.
 - 15. Statement on Exegetical Methodology, adopted by the Exegetical Department of Concordia Seminary, Now in Exile, December 9, 1970.
 - 16. Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the "Report of the Synodical President", p. 13.
 - 17. A Lutheran Stance, pp. 9-10.
 - 18. Martin H. Scharlemann and Horace Hummel, "Notes on the Valid Use of the Historico-Critical Method," p. 8.
 - 19. "He (Cardinal Bea) does what this reviewer has long contended can and should be done, namely, to hold to the fact that the Bible is a human book, written by men in their own setting in time, yet also a divine book, inspired by God and as such without error." J. A. O. Preus in The Springfielder 30 (1966), p. 49.

Historical-Critical Method

ITEM 2 - CONSERVATIVE POSITION PAPER

DEFINITION

The historical critical method is the procedure or process of the study of documents and other historical materials which employs and applies the techniques and tools of modern scientific* investigation and research with the aim of answering all grammatico-philological and historical questions pertaining to it. As applied to the study of the Bible the term implies, in addition, the steps, disciplines, or sub-methods to be followed and the aims normally included in their respective definitions. Present examples of these steps, disciplines, or sub-methods are textual criticism, form criticism, literary criticism, tradition history, and redaction history.

(*The word scientific is understood to mean that which is concerned with observation and with classification of observations leading to the writing of general laws.)

THESES

- 1) A basic aim of the historical critical method is to find the history of a given text as a unit and/or of its individual units. To understand the accounts in the text and/or in any of its units serves this basic aim. Whether the events recounted in the text are actual historical events is often of secondary importance.
- 2) The basic confidence that the historical critical method places in the steps, disciplines, or sub-methods cited above excludes the dimension of faith, divine intervention, and any understanding of an event which is not demonstrable, verifiable, or reproducible in terms of the experience of human beings today.
- 3) The claim that a method needs any modification of presuppositions or the addition of controls to make it a viable option for Christian exegetes indicates that such a method is not neutral per se.
- 4) The conclusions of the historical critical method--when it is applied consistently--are independent of the faith of the practitioner.

ANTITHESES

- 1) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that the Bible is merely man's response to what man might consider to be God acting in the world.
- 2) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that Jesus Christ erred or accommodated Himself to error.

- 3) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that an evangelist or an apostle of Jesus Christ, when writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, erred or accommodated himself to error or did not correctly explain or apply the Old Testament Scriptures.
- 4) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that people in Old Testament times were spiritually saved by their deeds and not through their trust in God's promises.
- 5) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to suspend his Christian convictions while he is employing that method.
- 6) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to assume that man's reason can sit in judgment over God's Word (the Holy Scriptures).
- 7) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to deny that there are rectilinear predictive prophecies of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.
- 8) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that Adam and Eve were not real and actual people and to deny that through Adam's fall man's nature and essence are corrupted.
- 9) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that the prophetic Old Testament types denoted by Jesus Christ and the apostles as corresponding to Him as the Messianic antetype are not historical, e.g., Jonah, David, Exodus, brazen serpent.
- 10) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that the meaning of a text must be determined by a study of the prehistory of the text rather than by a study of the text itself.
- 11) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that the meaning of a text must be determined by a study of extracanonical sources rather than by a study of the text itself.
- 12) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that the four Gospels are not integral and coherent historical accounts of the life of Christ.
- 13) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that God's revelation of Himself to people in Old Testament times came solely through God acting in history apart from any cognitive or dianoetic disclosure.

- 14) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that truths about God can be arrived at without the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- 15) We reject any method of studying the Bible, the application of which would ever lead a person to conclude that the Bible can be subjected to the same critical analysis as any other book.

Historical-Critical Method

ITEM 3 - MODERATE RESPONSE TO CONSERVATIVE POSITION PAPER

Re: Definition

1. The proposed definition takes no account of the divine side of Scripture. We believe that Christian interpreters will seek to do justice to the "human side" and the "divine side" of the Sacred Scriptures.
2. There is always a danger in using the term scientific outside of the physical and biological sciences. Our misgivings are increased by the "starred" definition and its reference to the writing of general laws. This does not seem to be appropriate to the literary and historical matters treated by biblical exegetes. "Scientific" also leaves the possibility open that this includes "scientism," by which we mean the view that this is a "closed universe." Such scientism, of course, we all repudiate.
3. It seems to us that the definition could be strengthened if it were clearly indicated that historical criticism is also in search of an accurate description of the theology presented in the text.
4. It is our conviction that the major disagreements we have in this area revolve around our definition of the historical critical method. What one side understands with this method is not at all what the other side understands.

We contend that since the historical critical method is such a complex matter, it is much more to the point to talk about "the historical critical method as it is used by us Lutherans." It seems to be fruitless to debate "the historical critical method as universally understood in scholarly circles," because our discussions in the ACDC have proved to us again that there is no such thing. The scholars in the ACDC disagreed on the definition of the historical critical method. To make a definition a point of division seems to us the height of folly.

Re: Theses

Thesis number 1 does not accurately reflect the facts about historical criticism. By definition historical criticism is primarily interested in as accurate an account as possible of the historical events reported in a given pericope. To us -- and to all other historical critics who are believing Christians -- it makes all the difference in the world whether the great events of our salvation actually took place.

Thesis number 2 is by no means commonly held by historical critics, and it must be categorically denied that this is what practitioners of it within the LCMS believe. Whether or not they still subscribe to this position, Martin H. Scharlemann and Horace Hummel accurately stated the situation

when they wrote: "The historico-critical method becomes necessarily and essentially vicious or 'negative' only when it proceeds from rationalistic or naturalistic assumptions . . ." (see footnote 1 in our paper on the valid use of the historical-critical method). The thesis of the Conservative Caucus represents misunderstanding and distortion. It fails to account for the modified use of analogy in contemporary historical criticism and it assumes that the definition of historical criticism as given by an out-and-out unbeliever is what all other historical critics mean by this term.

Thesis number 3 claims that historical criticism is not neutral because it requires the modification of presuppositions or the addition of controls. But such presuppositions and controls are absolutely essential for any method, no matter how neutral it is. Without them, the historical grammatical method has been used by various sects to deny the efficacy of infant Baptism and the Lord's Supper or to teach the millennium and the prohibition of pork.

When we call historical criticism or the historical grammatical method neutral, we mean that it can be put to good or bad use depending on the attitude or presuppositions of the user. A hammer is a neutral tool -- one can use it to drive a nail or to smash a finger. It all depends on the user!

Every exegete uses presuppositions for no method, in and of itself, takes account of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the real Interpreter of the text for every Christian exegete. If we were to follow the line of argument in Thesis 3, we would have to conclude that the historical grammatical method is also not a viable option for Christian exegetes since it surely needs the modification of presuppositions and the addition of controls.

Thesis number 4 can be properly understood but its intent is ambiguous. If they mean that conclusions about the chronology of the divided monarchy in Israel or the like are independent of faith, we would agree. Perhaps a Jew, a Christian, and an unbeliever could also come to very similar descriptions of what Paul meant by "faith" or by "justification." Such a descriptive method is independent of faith. But the believing interpreter also asks the question: do I accept in faith what the Bible tells me about the resurrection, the Virgin Birth, or Original Sin? His interpretation includes description of what the words meant in their original setting and proclamation or application of that message to himself and to contemporary Christians or circumstances. As the exegete searches for what God is saying to him, his conclusions are by no means independent of his faith or of his theological presuppositions.

Re: Antitheses

General Comments

a. The antitheses often flow from the inadequate definition and theses and therefore are of little help in leading to consensus.

b. The other caucus rejects a method because its application would lead a person to various wrong conclusions. On that basis they would have to reject the historical grammatical method since it has led many non-Lutheran scholars to deny infant baptism and the real presence or to teach the millennium and the continuing validity of the Old Testament dietary laws.

c. They use the strong word "reject" without ever indicating why Scripture leads to such a conclusion or why Scripture enables them so to limit the freedom of others. Unless they can show from sound logic or Scriptural proof that their opinion is the only one possible on a controverted issue, we of course cannot and will not agree to their rejections.

d. In some cases our brothers seem to be saying that a method is to be rejected if it leads to conclusions different from the ones common in our tradition.

e. Quite often they seem not to be talking about the historical critical method at all but about their fear that the basic doctrines of our faith are being eroded. We declare without equivocation that we hold to the orthodox faith on these issues, as defined by Scripture and the Confessions, no less than our brethren, also on those matters below on which we do not make specific comments.

f. We think it would be most unfortunate if anyone were to draw the implication from their listing of antitheses that the doctrinal aberrations to which they refer have had any followers among us.

Specific comments on the antitheses:

1. We join our brothers in affirming that the Bible is God's Word and not the mere response of humans to what they considered God to be acting or saying.
2. We agree that nothing dare impair the precious doctrine that Jesus is the true Son of God or detract in any way from Scripture's clear testimony that Jesus is without sin. (Hebrews 4:15) At the same time we believe that Jesus met people where they were and so accommodated himself at times to the limitations of their knowledge. Such accommodation has always been taught among us. It is not adequately described by the word "error," let alone by the word "sin."
3. We too believe that the Apostles and Evangelists correctly interpreted the Old Testament although they used many methods of interpreting the text that are not practiced today. Just because the Biblical writer used first century exegesis to make his point does not make his interpretation erroneous. Rather, it shows how God speaks His Word to real people in their own real situations. This antithesis also makes the mistake of equating inspiration with inerrancy. (see our document on this subject for elaboration).

4. We emphatically concur with the other caucus in rejecting the idea that people in Old Testament times were saved by their deeds rather than through their trust in God's promises. (Cf. Galatians 3 and Apology IV) People are saved solely by God's grace in the Old and New Testaments. We rejoice that practitioners of the historical grammatical method and the historical critical method among us have not succumbed to the heresy rejected in this antithesis.
5. We wholeheartedly concur in this rejection. An exegete must submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His written Word and not be cowed by his own method if he deserves the name Christian.
6. We agree that we can never sit in judgment on God's Word. Rather, God's Word infallibly judges and corrects us, just as it infallibly points us to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We reject every form of rationalism whether it hides under the guise of historical criticism or the historical grammatical method. To have a discriminating appreciation of the Bible, to recognize where it speaks metaphorically, where literally, to agree with Luther that John, the Pauline corpus, and Peter are "superior" to the rest -- all these "judgments" are not "sitting in judgment over God's Word."
7. We affirm with thanks that the Lord has given us predictive messianic prophecies in the Bible, and we confess with joy that Jesus is the fulfillment and the ultimate interpretation of them all. While we have no strong objections to the word "rectilinear," we doubt whether it clarifies the discussion.
8. We affirm that Original Sin is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith which wards off both the Manichaeian and the Pelagian heresies. (Augsburg Confession II, Apology II, Formula of Concord, Epitome and Solid Declaration I) We believe that man was created perfect and holy but rebelled against God and sinned. Nevertheless, God did not turn his back on us but acted toward us with grace, culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While there is disagreement among us about the degree to which Genesis 1-3 is to be taken figuratively, there can be no difference on the doctrines therein affirmed. The figurative interpretation of Genesis 1-3 does not stem from rebellion against God's Word but flows from a serious and responsible attempt to deal with the nature of the biblical text from the perspective of the 20th century context in which we live.
9. We too reject any method or conclusion which chips away at the person or work of Jesus Christ. Advocates of a typological interpretation of the Bible, on the other hand, must demonstrate why the types, of whom Christ is the fulfillment or antitype, must be historical. Paul finds a type of Christ in the water-giving

rock that rolled along behind the Israelites according to Jewish tradition. (I Cor. 10) Must we insist that the rock did in fact follow Israel through the desert? Typological exegesis is by definition one of the figurative methods that has been used with much profit throughout the history of the church. To imply that there are any among us who deny the historicity of David or of the Exodus is false and most unfortunate.

- 10 and 11. These two antitheses pose false alternatives and therefore confuse rather than clarify. We agree with the CTCR in affirming that the canonical form of the text is the authoritative one, but we also agree with the CTCR in its belief that study of the prehistory of a text (say in the Pentateuch or in the Synoptic Gospels) may help us to understand better the canonical text. Similarly, the study of extrabiblical customs, laws, or the religious documents of the pagan world may help us to understand the words Israel used or the challenges to the faith which they were combating, but of course the words of the Biblical text itself are determinative for what the Bible means.
12. By this antithesis the conservative caucus apparently intends to reject the use of any source hypothesis for studying the Gospels and to reject the idea that the units of which a given Gospel is composed had an independent history in the life of the early church before the Spirit led the Biblical author to include them in the text. Such a rejection rests on a most arbitrary and debatable reading of the internal evidence in the Gospels themselves and seems to ignore the Bible's own testimony in Luke 1:1-4. While we respect the right of anyone to hold such an opinion, the subjectivity of this position and its lack of Scriptural support preclude it from becoming a matter of division in the church. At the same time we joyfully affirm that God has given us a reliable account of the deeds and words of Jesus in the four Gospels.
13. We concur in this antithesis.
14. We concur in this antithesis. Readers of this document should be aware that neither antithesis 13 or 14 speaks to any real or present aberration in our circles.
15. All of us who have been led by the Spirit of God to faith in Christ Jesus can never subject the Bible to the same critical analysis as any other book. While the Bible must be investigated according to appropriate philological and historical analysis, the Bible is always at the same time God's address to us in Law and Promise.

Historical-Critical Method

ITEM 4 - CONSERVATIVE RESPONSE TO MODERATE POSITION PAPER*

Summary Statement

The Moderate Caucus

- 1) has not provided a careful and precise definition of the Historical Critical Method;
- 2) has not defined the word "neutral";
- 3) has not demonstrated that the Historical Critical Method is a "neutral tool";
- 4) has not indicated how the use of the Historical Critical Method with so-called Lutheran presuppositions differs from the use of the HCM by others who make no such profession.

The stance of a public teacher of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod implies that he will employ--and teach-- a method of Bible study that is consistent with the expectations of those who charge him with such responsibility. The Conservative Caucus considers the following principles/presuppositions of the Historical Critical Method to be inconsistent with and contrary to the stance required of a public teacher of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod:

- a) the consistent application of the principle of analogy,
- b) the canonical text (that is, the Bible as we have it) is comprised of layers of tradition which can be peeled away,
- c) the Bible can be treated as any other human book,
- d) the adequate use of the HCM can provide the answer to every legitimate question addressed to the Biblical text,
- e) the HCM is the only modern way to do exegesis,
- f) the philosophical base of existential and/or process philosophy,
- g) the consistent application of the tools and techniques of modern scientific investigation,
- h) the human side of the Bible is the only legitimate area of study,
- i) the interpreter is required to suspend his personal religious convictions as he employs the various techniques and elements of the HCM.

*See Appendix 1 for Explanation of Conservative Format and
Appendix 2 for Moderate Caucus Evaluation of the Report of the ACDC.

Also, while it is true that certain portions of the Bible are units, we do not consider it the province of a public teacher of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod to determine and to trace the independent history of what some may consider to be precanonical units of tradition.

The members of the Conservative Caucus are concerned that the HCM does not encourage the interpreter to treat the Holy Scriptures in terms of their uniqueness as the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God. Instead the HCM requires the interpreter to set aside any regard for the Bible as a unique book that God has given to His Church to instruct people for salvation and to equip His people "for every good work" (compare 2 Timothy 3:16, 17). A method that by definition rules out regard for the uniqueness and divine character of the Holy Scriptures cannot be validly used by a public teacher of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. To change or to substitute other principles/presuppositions for those inherent in the HCM in effect destroys the method. To use the method with presuppositions other than those implied in the HCM itself calls the whole process into question.

The Moderate Caucus has described the HCM as a "neutral" tool. In the context of the difficulties within the Synod the HCM would be a "neutral" tool only if both sides of the controversy agreed that the HCM is a valid and acceptable method.

Members of the Moderate Caucus have compared the HCM to a "hammer". A "hammer" is a hand tool that is by design and construction useful only for specific tasks and functions. Inherent in the use of a hammer is the application of force. A hammer is used for the purposes of beating, driving, and shaping. The desire for a change is implied. The Conservative Caucus rejects any understanding that involves the use of a "tool" that beats, drives, shapes, or changes Holy Scriptures. The Conservative Caucus prefers a method that permits--and even urges--the interpreter to study, to view, to listen to, to reverence, and to stand in awe of the Holy Scriptures as the rarest of God-given treasures.

The members of the Conservative Caucus conclude that a number of basic doctrines of Holy Scripture are called into question by the approach toward Scripture that is evident in the Moderate Caucus Document. The basic doctrines called into question are

- 1) the unique character of the Sacred Scriptures as the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God,
- 2) the two natures of Jesus Christ--particularly the divine attribute of omniscience during His state of humiliation.

Response in Detail

1. Definitions

The historical critical method is essentially the application to Scripture of the principles of historical research and of literary criticism. This method is concerned with the setting of a document, its sources, and the events discussed or implied by the document. The historical critical method seeks to do justice to both the "human side" of Scripture as well as (at least within the church) to its "divine side." [67]

One noted conservative scholar has written: "'Criticism,' as we would define the term, does not mean sitting in judgment on the Bible as the Word of God. Criticism means making intelligent judgments about historical, literary, textual, and philological questions which one must face in dealing with the Bible, in the light of all evidence available, when one considers that the Word of God has come to men through the words of men in given historical situations." [67]

Scripture is addressed to man, the whole man, heart, soul, and mind. Through Scripture the Holy Spirit brings us the deeds and words of God and so creates faith in us. While faith "sees" and "hears," the language of Scripture is also perceived through eye and ear and mind. Biblical criticism (discriminating appreciation) is one mode of the mind's response to this address,... [67]

Sometimes the historical grammatical method is described as "literal" and the historical critical method as "figurative." We believe this is a misunderstanding. Actually both methods are committed to taking the text seriously as it stands and either method may discover literal or figurative elements. [68]

Because of the great variety of definitions and underlying philosophies, we can speak most meaningfully on this issue if we examine historical criticism as practiced in The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Just as advocates of the historical grammatical method object to the charge of bibliolatry, although this seems to be practiced by some fundamentalists who use the historical grammatical method, so practitioners of the historical critical method within the Synod rightly object to the charge of skepticism or rationalism, though that charge seems to apply to certain non-Christian historical critics. [68]

A precise and complete definition of any method which is the construct of a man is necessary if the use of the method is to be defended. A precise and complete definition must include a clear statement of purpose. A description of a method is not the same as a definition. The statement of definition that is offered by the Moderate Caucus is inadequate. Also, the "principles" that are mentioned in the first sentence are not given. What are the "principles of historical research and of literary criticism" that can be applied to the study of Scripture? Are these "principles" compatible with the Christian's understanding of the divine nature of Holy Scripture? Since, in any method, its steps and submethods are properly considered part of its definition, we include their descriptions here under "definition" as well:

Basic elements or "steps" in the method

The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) listed the following as basic and legitimate elements of the so-called historical critical method:

1. *Establishing the text.*
2. *Ascertaining the literary form of the passage.*
3. *Determining the historical situation.*
4. *Apprehending the meaning which the words had for the original author and hearer or reader.*
5. *Understanding the passage in the light of its total context and of the background out of which it emerged.*⁴ [68]

To equate "basic elements" with "'steps' in the method" makes the CTCR Stance Document say more than it intends. The "basic elements" that are listed are the common property of most methods of Bible study in use today. The five "basic elements" are not the elements that make the HCM unique and distinctive. Also, in identifying "basic and legitimate elements of the so-called historical critical method" the CTCR document implies that there are elements of that method that are not legitimate.

*In 1970, the exegetical department of Concordia Seminary listed the following techniques as characteristic of the historical critical method:*⁵

1. *Linguistic study, to determine the meaning of the words and sentence constructions for the original author.*
2. *Textual criticism, to establish as nearly as possible the reading of the text after its latest significant redaction.*
3. *Form criticism and stylistic study, to ascertain the genre of composition to which the unit belongs and the elements of prose or poetic style which characterize it. This aids in understanding the author's intent, by bringing out both the typical and the unique features of form and style in comparison with other texts.*

4. *Study of the setting, to determine both the typical situation in the life of the people that would characterize any text of its genre and also, if possible, the specific historical occasion which gave rise to the individual text under study.*
5. *Tradition history, to trace the transmission and development of the motifs or clusters of motifs from their origin to their appearance in the text under study. Comparative materials from outside the Bible may prove helpful either as analogies or as actual sources. Such a study can often significantly clarify not only the ideas of a text but also the intended impact on the initial hearers.*
6. *Redaction history, to reconstruct the process by which the materials of the text under study were combined with other materials and edited until the book reached its canonical form. The evangelists, for example, often arranged their materials more according to themes than chronology, as can be seen in the five great discourses in Matthew, the Prologue of Luke (1:1-4), or the structure and content of John. This "editorial activity" was, of course, done by the power of the Holy Spirit and should be included in any discussion of the nature of inspiration. [68f]*

The techniques described in the MCD (Moderate Caucus Document) are in and of themselves also sub-methods, all of which are rarely employed by every practitioner of the HCM and which are in some cases self-contradictory.

In the case of form criticism the definition is false and is a definition of stylistics in the general sense.

Tradition History and Redaction History are "elements" of the HCM on which the CTCR Stance Document did not make direct comment, unless one is to assume that these two "elements" are elements that are not legitimate.

On page 40 (cf. Footnote 1, [78]) of the work cited by the Moderate Caucus, G. E. Ladd writes,

It should be clear, therefore, that the definition of terms is highly important; and it is for this reason that the present writer would suggest that the term "historical-theological criticism," which recognizes the revelatory dimension in biblical history and the revelatory nature of the Bible, is more serviceable than the more traditional term "historical-critical method," which has been developed by rationalistic scholarship.

The proponents of a thorough-going historical-critical method have insisted that historical study must be free from the restraint of any theological dogma, particularly from any doctrine of an inspired Scripture; that the biblical critic must be as open to any historical-critical conclusions as the researcher in the physical sciences must be open to the evidence of any and all facts; that any theological understanding of the Bible as the Word of God must automatically place a restraint upon the freedom of proper historical and critical investigation. However, the history of criticism shows that the proponents of a purely historical method themselves have not been motivated by a completely objective open-minded approach, but have approached the Bible with distinct philosophical and theological ideas about how it should be interpreted. In other words, their critical study was dominated by certain limiting presuppositions.

In Footnote 1 the MCD refers to a study paper entitled "Notes on the Valid Use of the Historico-Critical Method." In March 1975, Dr. Horace Hummel released a paper entitled "Commentary On 'Notes On -- H. C. Method'". In that paper Dr. Hummel indicates that in the light of past history the term "historical-grammatical" should be substituted for the term "historico-critical" in every instance that the term appears in the document "Notes On The Valid Use Of The Historico-Critical Method". Dr. Hummel cautions that the "Sitz im Leben" of the 1958 document is quite different from the situation today.

2. Presuppositions

a. Methodological

The historical-critical method presupposes that the methods of historical research and literary criticism ought to apply to Scripture. Historians and literary critics have found that documents from the past tend to adhere to certain general rules that aid in deciding what an ancient author was trying to say, what his motive in writing was, and (if the document is descriptive) what the relationship is between the narration and what actually happened. In particular, from comparative studies of religions, they have found that authors of documents of religious significance follow restrictive patterns in their uses of literary styles and descriptions of their leaders, gods, heroes.

Conservatives do not presuppose that these rules and patterns inferred from human documents and human religions should find any application at all to the written Word of God. They say that God has chosen to speak to men of all times through a small number of prophets and apostles, whom He selected and inspired to His purpose to write His words. Apart from the language itself, they find little similarity between this process and the work of human beings writing to particular audiences and situations from particular human perspectives and prejudices.

The MCD does not come to grips with such crucial questions as "To what extent does a unit of Scripture describe real events which occurred largely as the unit describes? How many of the 'traditional units' describe something that happened?" Yet this is a major presupposition that is at the basis of what the MCD (page 69) calls a "crucial methodological problem," although the document nowhere treats it systematically. Many leading historical critics explicitly approach the Biblical text on the assumption that most of the descriptive material in the Gospels is figurative, literary forms selected by human minds to communicate to a particular situation some fact or teaching now lost. With this presupposition, they proceed along the "steps" listed (MCD, pages 68-69) to analyze the text in order to answer questions such as those included by the moderates as "aims" of the method. Obviously, this presupposition profoundly affects every conclusion they derive.

The members of the Conservative Caucus take the descriptive passages of the Bible to correspond to events in the past which happened as they are described in the text. They take the event, and the inspired description of it, to be divine forms of speaking to human beings.

The presuppositions listed in the MCD are for the most part pre-suppositions that refer to the posture of the interpreter as he studies the text and not to the principles/presuppositions that are inherent in the HCM. We understand that the following methodological/presuppositions are inherent in the Historical Critical Method. (While the MCD does not contain a listing of "the principles of historical research and of literary criticism," the MCD does give evidence of an awareness of those principles.)

- (1) the principle of analogy (The following would be an illustration of the principle of analogy. We have no evidence that people are rising from the dead in our cemeteries today. Therefore people did not rise from the dead in the past. Jesus did not rise from the dead.); and related to this are:
- (2) the Bible is a human book and can be treated as any other human book;
- (3) the consistent application of the tools and techniques of modern scientific investigation.

In fact, the Moderate Caucus has justified its use of the historical-critical method by stating:

"Basically all the techniques associated with 'historical critical' methodology...are legitimated by the fact that God chose to use as His written Word human documents written by human beings in human language. That is, He employed human forms of communication to disclose to human beings what they need to know and believe about God and about His will for the salvation of all human beings.

"Because of the wealth of information about the biblical milieu we are privileged to possess, 'historical-methodology provides us with valuable insights into the intended meaning of the written Word of God as we have it. ...[70]

The logic behind the quotation would permit one to say that God "legitimated" sin because Jesus was born of a sinful woman.

There are many definitions of the historical critical method, but all of them presuppose the use of the principle of analogy in modern historical investigation. Contemporary exegetes are well aware that this principle itself must be subjected to rigorous criticism: "If an event is reported in the tradition, the fact that there is no immediate analogy between it and our everyday experience of reality is insufficient grounds for denying that it happened...The absolutization of the principle of analogy will shrink the possibilities of historical knowledge as well as remove the historical basis of faith."² Those scholars who absolutize the principle of analogy have a man-centered (anthropocentric) view of history, but we can thank God that among us historical criticism has been used by people who truly believe that God is the center and goal of history and that God has acted decisively in history for our salvation.³ [67]

We do not deny, of course, that some practitioners of historical criticism outside The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod have rejected facts or doctrines that we hold to be essential. These aberrations, however, can be attributed either to inadequate use of the method or to the rationalistic or evolutionistic presuppositions of the scholars in question. [78, Footnote 3]

Thus the MCD does indicate that this principle "must be subjected to rigorous criticism." We would ask Who or what becomes the judge of the applicability of the principle of analogy in a given situation?

We find the following to be completely self-contradictory:

3. The Christian interpreter...cannot adopt uncritically the presuppositions and canons of the secular historian. In his use of historical techniques the interpreter will be guided by the presuppositions of his faith in the Lord of history. It is indeed true that Christian faith rightly sees in the historicalness of God's redemptive work...a divine warrant for the use of 'secular' means and methods in the study of His Word, including linguistic, literary, and historical analysis of the texts. But at the same time faith recognizes that there is more to history than can ever be adequately measured by 'laws' derived exclusively from empirical data and rational observation. [73]

The next two methodological presuppositions are fundamental to any definition of form criticism, tradition criticism, and redaction criticism, and are implicit in the descriptions given of them under "definitions":

- (4) the canonical text is comprised of layers of tradition which can be peeled away;
- (5) the books of the Bible are individual units that are comprised of individual units, each unit having its own independent history;
- (6) the inductive method takes precedence over the deductive method;
- (7) the human side of the Bible is the only legitimate area of study;

How can we best minister to all of Christendom in theological scholarship--by rejection of the generally accepted method of Historical Criticism? Or by showing through responsible Biblical scholarship how this method and others can be useful for those who employ them with adequate Christian presuppositions and controls? [77]

It is difficult to understand how the Bible could be studied responsibly today without using some form of these exegetical steps. To the extent that "Historical grammarians" use these steps they expose themselves to a crucial methodological problem. If they explain the picture of the cosmos in the Old Testament (geocentric view, with flat earth and hard sky) as mere figurative language, they are making a form critical judgment, which may even be contrary to the view of the biblical authors themselves. In addition, once historical grammarians make this form critical judgment, they are hard pressed to demonstrate methodologically why it is wrong to take other passages, such as Genesis 1 or Jonah, figuratively if such a judgment is based solely on the text itself (internal literary criteria), the immediate context, or the general context, and not on anti-supernatural bias. [69]

(8) the philosophical use of existential and/or process philosophy;

In its long history the Church has used many methods of interpreting the Sacred Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit has been able to work graciously through them all. This variety is seen in the New Testament itself, which sometimes employs an allegorical method (Galatians 4), a rabbinic method (1 Cor. 10, including the Jewish tradition that the rock struck by Moses followed the Israelites through the desert), a typological method (Romans 5:14), a paradoxical method toward interpreting the law (compare Mt. 5:17-18 and Mt. 19:7-9), and, of course, throughout the New Testament, a Christocentric interpretation of the Old Testament (e.g. Romans 10:5-10).⁶ [69f]

Later methods include the Antiochene school of exegesis (literal or historical, influenced by Aristotle) and the rival Alexandrian school (allegorical, mystical, influenced by Platonic philosophy); the fourfold sense most medieval exegetes expected to find in every passage of the Scriptures; and the various 'historical' methods (including the historical critical and historical grammatical) since the Reformation. Experience has shown that no method is without its perils and that no method guarantees that an exegete will infallibly disclose all the facets of God's intended message. Each method in some way reflects the philosophical and religious insights of its day. The CTCR was badly mistaken in 1973 when it told the church that for more than eighteen centuries the Christian Church answered all exegetical questions in a manner sufficiently consistent to make it possible to speak of a clearly identifiable traditional position, the historical-grammatical view.⁸ [70] [Emphasis added]

In using the term "historical criticism" we should be careful to point out the many philosophies of history (for example, idealism, positivism, existentialism), each with certain strengths and weaknesses. Idealist historians like von Ranke looked for the spirit who moves through history. Positivism tried to turn history into a science in which the search for "causes" and "laws" was the sole and proper occupation of the investigator. Existentialist historians often seem concerned with "meaning" to the exclusion of establishing "fact." While this is not the place to decide which philosophy of history is most adequate in the late 20th century, we call this important issue to the attention of our readers to remind them

that the relationship between fact and meaning will vary depending on one's philosophy of history. It is no surprise, then, that historical critics and historical grammatists come up with results that exhibit differences not only between the two schools, but within each as well. [67f] [Emphasis added]

No matter what one might be assured about "Lutheran presuppositions," application of the historical-critical method as a scientific tool implies, as does application of any scientific tool:

- (9) adequate use of the HCM can provide the answer to every legitimate question that is addressed to the Biblical text;
- (10) the interpreter of the Bible is required to suspend (hold in limbo) his personal religious convictions as he follows the process of the HCM in any given study of the Bible;
- (11) the historical-critical method is a neutral tool.

"In and of itself so-called 'historical critical' methodology is neutral . . . (When used with Lutheran Presuppositions, of course, the historical critical method loses its neutrality and becomes a tool in the service of Lutheran theology. We would say the same thing of the exegetical method of Luther or of the historical grammatical method.) Part of our present problem lies in the fact that some of us remember that the opponents of Christianity were among the first to make extensive use of historical criticism to call the church's faith and the church's Scriptures into question. We have at the same time tended to forget that in other situations other foes of Christianity have used other methods of interpretation to try to refute and ridicule the Church's faith." (At the famous Scopes trial, for example, Clarence Darrow used a literal reading of the text to mock the Biblical record.) [70]

In their discussions members of the Moderate Caucus compared the HCM to a hammer, which they understand as a "neutral" tool. In the context of the difficulties within our Synod the HCM would be a "neutral" tool only if both sides of the controversy agreed that the HCM is indeed a valid and acceptable method. A "hammer" is a hand tool that is by design and construction useful only for specific tasks and functions. Inherent in the use of a hammer is the application of force. A hammer is used for the purpose of beating, driving, and shaping. The desire for change is implied. The Conservative Caucus rejects any understanding that involves the use of a "tool" that beats, drives, shapes, or changes Holy Scriptures. The Conservative Caucus understands that in giving us the Holy Scriptures God has given us a most precious jewel, the rarest of treasures. The Conservative Caucus, therefore, prefers a method that permits---and even urges and encourages---the interpreter to study, to view, to listen to, to reverence, and to stand in awe of the Holy Scriptures as the rarest of God-given treasures.

b. Doctrinal Presuppositions

(1) Sola Scriptura

While we may agree on the principle of Sola Scriptura, the understanding of and/or the application of the principle must differ among us since we hold differing views. The Conservative Caucus regards Holy Scriptures to be authoritative in all matters on which they speak clearly. Where a tension develops between what the Biblical text says and what secular history, comparative religion, and archeology report the Conservative Caucus would accept the Biblical information as accurate and correct. In contrast, we find:

4. All sides agree on the Sola Scriptura principle.

For the church in its public teaching, the Holy Scriptures are the only rule and norm. (FC, SC, Tappert, p. 505, par. 9) The Bible is the authority superior to all tradition, superior even to the creeds and the confessions. "Sola Scriptura" means the denial of the claims to absolute authority by councils, popes, bishops, or synodical conventions. Conservatives have at times claimed "sola scriptura" as a reason for not using the historical critical method. They believe that the latter places reason above Scripture and thus deprives Scripture of its "sola" position. Moderates agree with the destructive effects that would result if reason were elevated above Scripture, but moderates fear that such rationalism takes place precisely when conservatives insist that the Bible's standards of historicity and facticity must conform to our own, when the Scriptures themselves make no such claim. In addition moderates sometimes detect an "anti-intellectualism" in the conservative position, which does not take adequate account of the legitimate role our minds play in understanding the words, thoughts, and history recorded in the ancient text. [76]

One difficulty in the current crisis is the attempt by conservatives to isolate a third "authority": the Bible is authoritative on "everything on which it speaks", including history, geography, and science. Note that this authority on "the things" incidentally included in the Bible is never treated in the Confessions, in our ordination vows, nor in Scripture itself, and that an opinion on it is finally

irrelevant to faith since we believe in Jesus Christ our Lord because we have been called by the Gospel. The danger in all this is not so much that conservatives have ignored the findings of modern historians and archeologists (although this has sometimes been true), but that it presupposes the "domino" theory, namely, that if the Bible were "wrong" (by our modern scientific standards!) in one place the whole structure of the faith would crumble. If we follow this argument carefully, we find that it makes the authority of the Gospel of God dependent on human efforts to validate it. It is our belief and confession that the Scriptures do not lie to us, but they point us to Christ without fail and serve as the norm for our doctrine and life. [74f]

...We also hold that those technical questions involved in interpretation which neither aid nor impair the right understanding of the Gospel (in its full sense) ought not become a matter of controversy in the church (cp. Apology, VII, 20f.: FC. SD. Summary, 15)... [72]

(2) Scripture is its own Interpreter

Similarly, although conservatives certainly teach this principle, they differ sharply from the moderate representation of it.

3. All sides agree that Scripture is its own interpreter.

This does not mean, of course, that there is no need for exegetes. Rather this slogan has been used and should continue to be used in three ways:

- a) Since the Bible is its own interpreter the central administration of the church does not function as the sole interpreter, as was true in medieval Roman Catholicism and which threatens to become true in the Missouri Synod.
- b) The dark passages are to be interpreted by the clear. On the linguistic level this is a truism and need not be discussed further here.
- c) On a deeper level "Scripture as its own interpreter" and "clear passages interpreting the dark" refer to a much more important item: The Gospel center gives us the clue to understanding those parts of Scripture which do not seem to express the saving message with complete clarity. Lutherans, for example, have used the

Pentateuch and prophets as an interpretive key for understanding the wisdom books in the Old Testament and Paul's letter to the Romans to understand James. [75f]

In our discussions with members of the Moderate Caucus we found a sharp difference in our understanding of such passages as Philippians 2:1-11 and Matthew 22:41-46, particularly as it refers to Psalm 110. What concerns us is that the understanding held by some of the members of the Moderate Caucus is identical to that held by historical critics who do not claim to go at their task with Lutheran Presuppositions. At this point the doctrine of the two natures of Christ is involved. Questions such as the following need to be pursued further: To what extent did Jesus Christ accommodate Himself to the thought processes and exegetical practice of the first century? Did Jesus Christ accommodate Himself to "error"? Prior to His resurrection did Jesus Christ fail to use the attribute of omniscience?

- 5) All sides agree that the Old Testament must be understood in the light of the New.

Because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, everything has been changed, and we now know God much more fully than His Old Testament people did. (Heb.1) We now can see clearly that the only answer to man's fall into sin is God's gift of forgiveness, life, and salvation in His Son. Conservatives sometimes neglect the fact that Jesus is both the complete fulfillment of God's Word in the Old Testament AND its ultimate interpretation. The promised messiah, for example, is often described in nationalistic and even martial terms in the Old Testament, but God kept this promise by sending His Son to create a whole new people that transcends lines of nation, race, and sex. This Son renounced force by surrendering His own Life for our sakes on the cross. To insist that the New Testament use of an Old Testament passage must be the literal or historical grammatical understanding of the Old Testament passage is to neglect the variety of exegetical methods employed in the New Testament which we briefly outlined above. [76f] (Emphasis added)

Conservatives and moderates agree on the great importance of the next three principles in the interpretation of Scripture:

(3) Centrality of Gospel

(4) The right distinction of Law and Gospel

(5) The mindset of faith.

*"As Lutherans, however, we operate with certain presuppositions when we approach the Scriptures. These include: 1) the centrality of the Gospel in the Scriptures; 2) the distinction between the Law, which always accuses, and the Promise, which always assures; 3) the Spirit's gift of faith as the prerequisite to receive the Promise and obey the commandments of God."*⁴ [72]

Nevertheless they disagree, once again, on the meaning of 3 and 4, as discussed in the responses to the moderate documents on Gospel and Scripture and on the Third Use of the Law.

c. Theological Presuppositions

Frequent reference is made throughout the moderate report to "Lutheran presuppositions." These almost invariably seem to be presuppositions of the following kind, although no indication is ever provided as to how these presuppositions could ever be incorporated into the work of the historical critic to restrict his interpretations and conclusions.

Presuppositions of Biblical Interpretation

A. All members of Synod "accept without reservation":

1. *The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice;*
2. *All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.*¹²

B. *In its excellent "Lutheran Stance" Document, the CTCR offered the following presuppositions:*

1. *"As Christians we come to the interpretation of Holy Scripture in the assurance of our Baptism as the event from which we derive our new nature and perspective...By God's grace we have been given the power to interpret the Scriptures and to know Christ, which is impossible without the Holy Spirit."*
2. *We affirm our unconditional loyalty and commitment to the inspired Scriptures as the written Word of God.*
3. *We pray that the Lord...will continually enable us to stand with trembling awe and holy joy before the God Who addresses us in both judgment and mercy through the Biblical Word.*

4. We express our praise to Almighty God for all new information and fresh insights into Scripture...in recent times as well as throughout history.

5. Since the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired source and norm of all Christian preaching and teaching, we hold ourselves committed to the diligent and unremitting study of the written Word through the responsible use of every appropriate means and method that God has provided as an aid to our understanding of the Scriptures.

6. In hearty agreement with the Lutheran Confessions we affirm the right understanding of the Gospel (including the proper distinction of Law and Gospel as grounded in the article of justification) is the key that finally unlocks the meaning of Sacred Scripture. (Apology, IV, 2-5, German; FC, SC, V, 1). ... [71f]

C. The faculty majority of Concordia Seminary (now in exile), ...And the exegetical department distinguished themselves from other scholars when they stated:

"There have admittedly been historical critics who practiced the methodology with presuppositions differing from ours. Certain scholars, for example, have come with a very skeptical world view and have allowed little or no room for God and faith. Some seem to have taken delight in promoting novelties and opposing all traditional views.

"We are not such men. It is not the historical-critical method in itself that brings men to such positions, but the presuppositions with which they begin.... [72]

These Christian presuppositions are considered necessary also by many outside The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. At the ecumenical Study Conference, held in Oxford from June 29th - July 5th, 1949, historical critical scholars such as C. H. Dodd, W. Eichrodt, Anders Nygren, Alan Richardson, and G. E. Wright stated the following as "necessary theological presuppositions of Biblical Interpretation":

a) It is agreed that the Bible is our common starting point, for there God's Word confronts us...

b) It is agreed that the primary message of the Bible concerns God's gracious and redemptive activity... In this the Bible's central concern, an authoritative

claim is placed upon man and he is called to respond in faith and obedience throughout the whole of his life and work.

c) It is agreed that the starting point of the Christian interpreter lies within the redeemed community...

d) It is agreed that the centre and goal of the whole Bible is Jesus Christ...

e) It is agreed that the unity of the Old and New Testament is not to be found in any naturalistic development...but in the on-going redemptive activity of God in the history of one people...etc.
[78f] (Footnote 9)

Faithful to Our Calling, I, p. 41. Bracketed items added by the Moderate Caucus. [79] (Footnote 10)

We believe that careful use of historical criticism within the Missouri Synod has opened to us fresh insights into God's Word, and we categorically deny once more, that practitioners of the method within the Synod have denied such doctrines as the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection of our Lord, or Original Sin. [77]

These same sentiments come through in the following:

"We are not merely historical critics, but we are first of all baptized Christians and ordained pastors, committed to the Sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. These presuppositions and commitments, including our ordination vows, make us decisively different."16 [72f]

All sides agree that the Bible is inspired and totally reliable (This thesis will be treated more fully in the section on "Inspiration and Inerrancy." [77]

The members of the Conservative Caucus agree 1) that a Christian interpreter should interpret the Holy Scriptures differently than a non-Christian; 2) that reason, mind, and intellect are gifts of God; 3) that the Holy Scriptures are the vehicle through which God has communicated His immutable will and gracious plan of salvation to human beings; 4) that the Holy Spirit alone can give us the necessary spiritual discernment.

The members of the Conservative Caucus would, however, remind all concerned of the need to apply the admonition of the Apostle Paul to "take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

We recognize the members of the Moderate Caucus as sincere and dedicated men. We are, however, reminded that Saul/Paul was sincere in his persecution of the early Christians. Also, what good is the sincerity of the man who in the darkness of night "sincerely" drinks from a bottle of poison instead of drinking from a bottle of medicine?

3. Controls

The necessity for the imposition of controls indicates that logically something is not right. If the presuppositions that apply to the interpreter are correct and correctly applied and if the presuppositions/principles that are inherent to a method are correct, then controls would not be necessary. The imposition of controls indicates 1) the presuppositions that apply to the interpreter are incorrect or can be incorrectly applied, 2) the presuppositions/principles that are inherent to the HCM are incorrect, or 3) both 1) and 2) are incorrect.

The imposition of "controls" at this point adds another norm or standard of judgment to the norm of the Scriptures and the Confessions ---unless it can be clearly demonstrated that such "controls" flow from the Scriptures and the Confessions.

In its Lutheran Stance document, the CTCR suggested the following controls which still seem appropriate and valid:

- 1. The authoritative Word for the church today is the canonical Word, not precanonical sources, form, or traditions -- however useful the investigation of these possibilities may on occasion be for a clearer understanding of what the canonical text intends to say.*
- 2. The "literary form" of the text...is only a clue to understanding, not a criterion of truth. Moreover, the Christian interpreter reckons with the fact that God in His revelation may both modify conventional literary modes, even radically, and also create unique modes without analogy in other literature.*
- 3. The Christian interpreter...cannot adopt uncritically the presuppositions and canons of the secular historian. In his use of historical techniques the interpreter will be guided by the presuppositions of his faith in the Lord of history. It is indeed true that Christian faith rightly sees in the historicalness of God's redemptive work...a divine warrant for the use of 'secular' means and methods in the*

study of His Word, including linguistic, literary, and historical analysis of the texts. But at the same time faith recognizes that there is more to history than can ever be adequately measured by 'laws' derived exclusively from empirical data and rational observation.

4. The necessary effort to hear a text of Scripture first of all in its particularity, its meaning "then and there," must be balanced by an equal effort to hear the text both in its integral relation to all the rest of Scripture and in its meaningfulness for all who hear it today. This effort does entail above all a firm grasp of the essential unity of both Testaments, Old and New, and of their common witness to the one Truth that is as relevant now as when it was first proclaimed.
5. Whatever cognizance needs to be taken of the connection between Biblical materials and their background in the whole complex of social, cultural, political, economic, and religious factors of their day, a clear distinction must nevertheless be maintained between the unique, divine, and revelatory character of Scripture and the sheer human and contingent character of Scripture's earthly milieu . . . There is a qualitative difference between the inspired witness of Holy Scripture in all its parts and words and the witness, explicit or implicit, of every other form of human expression.¹⁷ [73]

Others have offered the following similar cautions:

"The question of 'how far' is an important one. Even if the Lutheran Confessions as taken seriously did not provide a sufficient answer to these problems, two major criteria may be advanced: (1) that of presuppositions ...and (2) by their fruits shall ye know them, that is, any application must be rejected which results in simple moralism, a denial of the basic historical matrices of the revelation, a relativization of all truth, etc. ...If the method is thus used conservatively, we feel certain that no doctrines of the Lutheran Church will be at stake... Any hermeneutics may be abused (the ancient literalism just as much as the contemporary historico-critical method): we shall continue to insist on correct use, as always."¹⁸ [74]

The conservative caucus wonders sincerely how many conclusions of the historical-critical method which differ from those of traditional interpretation would actually survive application of these controls. In regard to the last passage and footnote 18 it seems appropriate to quote directly from Dr. Hummel's "Commentary On 'Notes On the Valid Use of the Historico-Critical Method,'" page 8:

17. This is the only place where the original paper addressed itself explicitly to the question which, undoubtedly, was uppermost in the minds of many of its readers. If proper definitions are invoked, it might still be regarded as adequate, but, at least by hindsight, it is clear that the 'presuppositions' must include verbal inspiration and inerrancy. This is no rationalistic subversion of the 'evidence of faith,' but God's own gift for preventing 'faith' from vaporizing into existentialist mysticism.

The final sentence of the first paragraph sounds today as though it wants to repeat the current refrain that the historical-critical method is merely another neutral tool among many. When written, it could scarcely have been foreseen where all---many in our midst---would run with the ball. Also 'literalism' would have to today be liberated from the subjectivistic sloganeering in which it has long since become mired.

The Moderate Caucus itself writes:

Practitioners of the historical critical method within the Missouri Synod have always given the method only qualified approval. When asked whether the Lutheran Stance document gives unqualified approval to the "historical-critical" method, the CTCR replied: "No, the document has offered guidelines for the Church's proper use of the historical-critical method." [71]

...The 'criticism' which we practice is motivated by presuppositions of faith and is intended to discern clearly among the various levels and possibilities in the situations being studied. Our ultimate evaluation of the results obtained by this critical methodology arises not from the methodology itself but from our presuppositions, which are those of faith in God through Christ rather than those of pure naturalism, skepticism, or any other world view.¹⁵ [72]

4. Authority and Nature of Scripture

Most of what we would want to say here has already been covered under the previous headings.

While we would agree that some of the elements and techniques of the HCM may be helpful in understanding the "human side" of the Scriptures, we understand that the Scriptures and the Confessions caution us against adopting any method/technique which would by definition and/or usage limit, hinder, or destroy the "divine side" of the Holy Scriptures.

All sides agree that the Bible is inspired and totally reliable. [77]

Some members of the Moderate Caucus, however, emphasize the reliability of the Bible in terms of function rather than the reliability of the text in terms of specific facts contained therein. This may be due---at least partly---to a different understanding of the doctrine of inspiration.

- 1) All sides in the present controversy affirm the authority of the Holy Scriptures as the very Word of God.

The Bible's authority flows both from the fact that it is God's speech and from its Law-Gospel center -- these bases of course are intimately related to one another. "Gospel and Scripture" will form a separate document, but the following must be noted here:

- a) The authority of Scripture is causative, that is, it produces faith through the preaching of the Gospel (or convicts of sin by preaching the Law) and it is normative (sole rule and norm of faith and practice). [74]
- b) Scripture is authoritative because it is God's Word and because of its central message. Sometimes moderates have not adequately expressed this "both/and" situation although they have been correct in maintaining that the Gospel is at the center of the authority question. Since natural man cannot accept the authority of Scripture but first must be won to Christ through the Gospel, it is only for those in the faith that the Bible has authority, at least functionally. [75]

...Neither the Sacred Scriptures nor the Book of Concord enjoins a particular method as the only way of interpreting the Scriptures. When we use 'historical critical' methodology, we do so on the basis of Christian pre-suppositions.⁹ So employed, it has brought great

blessings to the Church and deepened the Church's appreciation of the written Word of God.¹⁰ [70]

The Conservative Caucus understands that the Biblical text is inerrant in terms of specific facts and that St. Paul and Moses, when speaking and writing under inspiration, were qualitatively more inspired than Christians today. We understand that ours is a "derived inspiration."

We find that at times some members of the Moderate Caucus confused "inerrancy" (which refers to the facts in the Biblical text) and "efficacy" (which refers to the property of power inherent in the Biblical text).

The discussion on the authority of Scripture of the MCD serves to illustrate the existential understanding and approach which pervades the entire document.

The definition of "authority" that is in Dr. A. L. Graebner's Doctrinal Theology, pages 8 and 9, is adequate for our purposes:

The authority of the Bible is that prerogative by which the Bible justly claims unrestricted acceptance of all its statements, full assent to all its teachings, unwavering confidence in all its promises, and willing observance of all its demands by those whom they concern, the prerogative by which it is the only infallible source and norm of doctrine and rule of life.

We see this as saying something different than the thought expressed in the sentence,

It is our belief and confession that the Scriptures do not lie to us, but they point us to Christ without fail and serve as the norm for our doctrine and life. [75]

Similarly the Conservative Caucus affirms the passage quoted by the Moderate Caucus:

"He (Cardinal Bea) does what this reviewer has long contended can and should be done, namely, to hold to the fact that the Bible is a human book, written by men in their own setting in time, yet also a divine book, inspired by God and as such without error." [79, Footnote 19]

However, throughout the MCD emphasis has been placed upon the "human side" of Scripture. The following questions need to be asked: "Does the Moderate Caucus want to give 'equal' status to the 'divine side' and the 'human side' of Scripture?" "Does the Moderate Caucus understand that the 'human side' of Scripture is in the service of the 'divine side' or is the 'divine side' in the service of the 'human side' of Scripture?" Which

'side' gives Scripture its authority?"

We regret that some members of the Moderate Caucus have made too precise a distinction between the explicit and the implicit teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

...for sooner or later the mind must answer certain questions: What is the nature of this document which is addressed to me? In what circumstances was it written? From what time? By or through whom? With what intent? [67]

- 2) All sides agree that the Bible is the Word of God and the word of men.¹⁹

Implicit in the present controversy is the fear of conservatives that the moderates deny the Bible as Word of God and the fear of moderates that conservatives deny the Bible as word of men. If either assertion about the Bible were to be denied, great damage would result. Our intellectual grasp of the divine-human character of the Bible is at best partial and subject to constant correction. The human side of Scripture has become clearer with the rise of historical criticism, and this has raised new problems. But we should be using the gifts God has given us to probe more deeply into these problems rather than squandering our gifts by pitting one partial understanding against another.

On the human level Scripture is to be interpreted like any literary document, but at the same time it is God's Word and hence to be interpreted in ways different from any other literature. Because of this paradoxical fact, the rules of Biblical exegesis cannot be made as rigid or precise as the methodological rules for mathematics, physical sciences, and the like. What needs to be stressed is that our view of the Scriptures, both as to their divine and human qualities, should be derived directly from the Scriptures themselves. We have no right to rationalize away the human side in order to defend the divine side. Nor have we a right to rationalize away the divine side in order to stress the human. [75]

PART D - THIRD USE OF THE LAW

ITEM I - CONSERVATIVE POSITION PAPER

1. The following definitions obtain:

The Law is the immutable will of God according to which man is to conduct himself in this world.

The first use of the Law is its use as a curb "to maintain external discipline and decency against dissolute and disobedient people" (FC SD VI, 1).

The second use of the Law is "to bring people to a knowledge of their sin" and to accuse them of it (FC SD VI, 1).

The third use of the Law is its use by the Holy Spirit "to instruct the regenerate out of it and to show and indicate to them in the Ten Commandments what the acceptable Will of God is and in what good works, which God has prepared beforehand, they should walk" (FC SD VI, 12).

The regenerate Christian (believer, reborn, justified) is anyone who believes in the Gospel of forgiveness of sin and salvation through Christ.

Justification is the pronouncement by God whereby He declares the sinner righteous, absolved of the guilt and punishment of his sin "for the sake of the righteousness of Christ, which God reckons to faith" (FC SD III, 17).

Sanctification (narrow sense) is the ongoing renewal or holiness of life which follows and is a result of justification. (Throughout the following, this meaning is implied with the term sanctification.)

We consider these definitions as used in doctrinal discussion pre-emptive by merit of 400 years of Lutheran tradition and therefore reject:

- (i) substitution of other definitions for them; or
- (ii) any use of these terms without definition which implies other meanings.

2. The use of the Law as a guide or teacher has to do only with the process of sanctification of the Christian, not his justification. For the Gospel promises that sinners are fully justified by faith alone, without the works of the Law. Conscience troubled by a need to seek or fulfill the norms of the Law for justification has lost clear sight of God's Word that believers are already justified through faith alone.

We therefore reject any teaching which uses the Law as norm in the justification of the sinner.

3. The Gospel brings freedom. This freedom of the Gospel means that the justified sinner is dead to the Law and free from the curse and power of the Law, as Scripture uses these terms.

We reject any teaching which distorts this meaning of Gospel freedom so that it implies that the regenerate Christian:

- (i) does not require the preaching of the Law as guide to his behavior;
 - (ii) is free of the new obedience, the obligation to keep His Commandments;
 - (iii) might reject or make as open questions that which Scripture clearly asserts.
4. Through the entire process of sanctification, the regenerate and justified man is an instrument of the Holy Spirit, Who motivates and incites all good works through the power of the Gospel. Thus, "The Law indeed tells us that it is God's Will and command that we should walk in the new life, but it does not give the power and ability to begin it or to do it. It is the Holy Spirit, who is not given and received through the Law but through the preaching of the Gospel..." (FC SD VI, 11).
5. Throughout his life of sanctification, the believer always needs the written Law as his only sure guide as to what is the shape and form of God-pleasing behavior. It is true that the good works he does are motivated by the Spirit through the Gospel and are properly considered fruits of the Spirit. If he were wholly sanctified in life, he would spontaneously do the Law, the Will of God, and would have no need for the written Law. However, throughout life, the old man clings to his nature. It is for this reason, the confessions write, that believers do always "require the teaching of the Law so that they will not be thrown back on their own holiness and piety and under the pretext of the Holy Spirit's guidance set up a self-elected service of God without His Word and command, as it is written, 'You shall not do every man whatever is right in his own eyes, but heed all these words which I command you. You shall not add to it nor take from it'" (FC SD VI, 20).

There is no good work apart from the Law. Thus, "The Ten Commandments (are) a summary of divine teaching on what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God. They are the true fountain from which all good works must spring, the true channel through which all good works must flow. Apart from these Ten Commandments no deed, no conduct can be good or pleasing to God, no matter how great or precious it may be in the eyes of the world" (Large Catechism,

Ten Commandments, 311).

We therefore reject any teaching which asserts that:

- (i) the Law can be known and good works recognized by the believer by some inner means, (e.g., urging or guidance of the Spirit, renewed will, conscience) apart from the written Law.
- (ii) the Spirit of Christ provides a final guide in decision-making for the Christian, beyond the written Law; and in particular, that under such guidance one might be brought, in these changing times, to restrict applicability of parts of the written Law to times past and to condone behavior expressly condemned by Scripture, such as adultery, willful abortion, theft, etc.

6. Since, then, only that is a good work which is in accordance with the Law, the keeping of the Commandments is the highest expression of love. "Love is the fulfilling of the Law." Rom. 13, 10.

We reject the erroneous teaching that there is any other norm for judging the expression of love than the written Law of God.

7. Apart from its civil function, the written Law simultaneously plays two roles in the sanctified life. Although they cannot be separated, they must be distinguished. The Christian is taught and guided by the Spirit, using the Law, in expression of his renewed will to do that which is God-pleasing. Nevertheless, he does always require the Law in its second and principal use even to make him aware of his sinful nature and to accuse him and call him to account for it. He never encounters the Law without experiencing this accusation, for it is always just and applicable to him. This is the meaning of the expression, "The Law always accuses." The confessions emphasize that these roles are simultaneous when they write, "Because of the desires of the flesh the truly believing, elect, and reborn children of God require in this life not only the daily teaching and admonition, warning and threatening of the Law, but frequently the punishment of the Law as well, to egg them on so that they follow the Spirit of God..." (FC SD VI, 9).

We therefore reject:

- (i) distortion of the expression "the Law always accuses" to mean "the Law only accuses." The former is a Lutheran teaching; the latter is not.
- (ii) any assertion that the teaching of the third use of the Law detracts from or excludes its second or accusatory function.

8. The use of the Law as accuser (second use) applies to all men, for believer and unbeliever alike are sinful by the standards of the Law. Similarly, the Law applies to both believer and unbeliever alike in its use as a curb of lawlessness and rebellion against duly constituted authority. In contrast, by its confessional definition the use of the Law as a guide or norm (its third use) applies only to believers, in whom alone the Spirit of God through the preaching of the Gospel renews the heart and gives the power and ability to seek and follow the Law of God.

We therefore reject the teaching that the third function of the Law is no more than the civil and accusatory functions applied to the Christian, to curb him and to make him aware of his sinful nature.

9. We affirm that the treatment of the third use of the Law by A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles is a concise statement of this doctrine as it is taught in Scripture and the confessions. Consistent with this, we affirm that the judgment of N.O. Res. 3-09 regarding the position of the former faculty majority on the third use of the Law is warranted by the Blue Book report and the subsequent Response of the former faculty.

We therefore reject the assertion of several published letters of dissent, that the treatment by A Statement of the third use of the Law is contrary to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

Third Use of the Law

ITEM 2 - MODERATE POSITION PAPER

With Lutherans down through the centuries since the Reformation "we pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated." (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, The Summary Formulation, Paragraph 3, pages 503-504)

We also continue to commit ourselves in our teaching to all the Lutheran symbols as contained in the Book of Concord, "as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God." (Constitution of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Article II) This confessional commitment includes subscription to Article VI of the Formula of Concord which teaches explicitly both in the Epitome and in the Solid Declaration the "Third Function of the Law." These articles clearly state a proper third use of the Law for believers in their Christian living.

I. Definitions

1. The Law is the immutable will of God according to which man is to conduct himself in this life.
2. The first use of the Law is its use as a guide for civil authorities and government "to maintain external discipline and decency against dissolute and disobedient people." (F.C.S.D. VI, 1)
3. The second use of the Law is "to bring people to a knowledge of their sin" (ibid) and to accuse them of it.
4. The third use of the Law is its use by the Holy Spirit "to instruct the regenerate out of it and to show and indicate to them in the Ten Commandments what the acceptable will of God is and in what good works, which God has prepared beforehand, they should walk." (F.C.S.D. VI, 12)
5. The regenerate (believers, reborn, justified) are all those who believe in the Gospel of forgiveness of sins and salvation through Christ.
6. Sanctification (used here and in following paragraphs in the narrow sense) is the ongoing transformation of holiness of life which follows and is a result of justification.

II. General Principles

1. Though by definition there are three distinct uses of the Law, we should note that all three functions of the Law operate simultaneously in the regenerate through the gracious activity of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The third use does not operate in unbelievers.
2. Article VI of the Formula of Concord teaches the proper third use of the Law for the regenerate Christian. This article contrasts the regenerate Christian with a perfectly and completely renewed Christian (paragraphs 6, 7 and again 17, 18), concluding that while a perfect Christian would need no guide, the justified regenerate Christian remains throughout life so imperfect in sanctification that he cannot rely on his own inner determination of God's will for his conduct. He daily requires the external guide and teaching of the written Law under the Holy Spirit for a God-pleasing life which is fruitful in good works.
3. The regenerate or justified Christian is "dead to the Law" and "free from the curse of the Law." (Romans 6:14-23; 7:4-6; Galatians 2:15-21; 3:10-14) Passages with such expressions as these emphasize the blessed state of the regenerate in being fully justified and in being delivered from the coercion, the curse, and the enslaving power of the Law, which plagues those who seek to be justified by the works of the Law.
4. By contrast Colossians 1:9-14; Philippians 1:9-11; 3:12-16; I Thessalonians 4:1-12 and other passages teach that the regenerate person's sanctification in this life is not complete or perfect, but that the believer is challenged constantly to reach out for higher levels of Christian living.
5. Improvement in sanctification and fruitfulness in good works on the part of the reborn are in accord with the immutable will of God comprehended in the Law. The Christian is "driven by the Spirit of Christ... These works are, strictly speaking, not works of the Law, but works and fruits of the Spirit." (F.C.S.D. VI, 17)
6. The Law does not motivate and empower the regenerate; only the Holy Spirit, "Who is not given and received through the Law, but through the preaching of the Gospel (Galatians 3:2-14) who renews the heart" (F.C.S.D., VI, II) (Titus 2:11-14) motivates the Christian life.
7. As we stated above, the Law, both in its second and third functions, is necessary for the regenerate. In connection

with the third use of the Law in the life of the regenerate we need to remember that the believer is at the same time, saint and sinner (*simul justus et peccator*). "...The conflict between spirit and flesh continues in believers. According to the inmost self they delight in the Law of God; but the Law in their members is at war against the law of their mind. (Romans 7:23) Thus though they are never without Law, they are not under but in the Law, they live and walk in the Law of the Lord, and yet do nothing by the compulsion of the Law." (F.C.S.D. VI 18) The regenerate as sinner needs the Law to accuse and crush him (second use) and to instruct him (third use), but as saint he needs the Gospel of God's grace to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:1-16)

8. Lutherans, on the basis of Holy Scripture and in agreement with the Lutheran Confessions, teach that while the Law serves as the rule in the life of the regenerate, it serves at the same time in its primary function as a mirror to show him his sins and his need for repentance.
9. In upholding the Law as the standard for a God-pleasing life and good works in the life of the regenerate, we must distinguish properly between the Promise and the Law so that in the Christian life Christ alone is glorified and God's grace remains grace alone. (*sola gratia*) "The subordinate position of the Law is clearly seen when we understand that Jesus Christ kept its demands and assumed its curse for us. His victory over the law puts the Law in its place as a vanquished servant. The Law no longer has any claim on us. Any effort to fulfill its demands in order to gain favor with God makes the Law our taskmaster and renders Christ's victory insufficient and ultimately unnecessary. The Law is useful as a servant who gives us guidance on how to live a life pleasing to God, but none of its demands, however subtle, can be made a prerequisite for receiving the Promise of Christ. We accept the Promise entirely on faith (*sola fide*)."
(Faithful I, pages 22-23)
10. The indwelling Holy Spirit uses the written Law in the life of the regenerate to instruct him in Christian living and in good works. The regenerate gratefully acknowledges this third function of the Law as divine guidance for his life. Though we affirm this proper third use of the Law as outlined in the Formula of Concord (S.D. VI), we wisely and necessarily express concern "that the works of the Spirit of Christ not be undermined through a legalistic use of

of the legislation in the Bible. The Christian is led by the Spirit of Christ to be free and to face up to the criticism of the Law and move beyond that criticism to deal in love with people. The Scriptures do offer guidance in loving one's neighbor as oneself, but the motivation and the final guide for the Christian in decision-making according to the Scriptures is the Spirit of Christ." (Response, pages 24-25. Galatians 5:13-26)

11. While we teach that believers are to find direction for fruitful Christian living through all Scriptural admonitions, such as the Ten Commandments, the Pauline exhortations (parenesis) and other exhortatory Scriptural expressions, all of which are in accord with God's immutable will, we must also understand and teach that the Holy Scriptures contain rules, regulations, and customs not specifically abrogated but which are relevant only in the cultural situation of the people originally addressed. Such passages are not to be made binding on the consciences of Christians in other times and cultural and social situations. Example of such passages are I Corinthians 11:4-16 (as applied to hair styles and head covering for men and women); Genesis 9:3-4; Deuteronomy 12:16; 22:5; I Timothy 2:9. (Augsburg Confession XXVIII, 56)

III. What Makes This An Issue?

The third use of the Law as a theological principle has become an issue in the Synod for the following reasons:

1. For some years questions have been raised in the Synod about the appropriateness of the use of the term "the third function of the Law" and about the legalistic manner in which this teaching is applied at times on the parish level. (CTM XXI, No. 2; Pages 123-129; "Hermeneutics and Pauline Parenesis" by Walter J. Bartling from A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics, 1969, pages 57-83.)
2. Resolution 3-09, 50th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, July 6-13, 1973, on the basis of the findings of the Synodical President's "Fact Finding Committee" and his report to the Synod, charges that the stance of the former Faculty Majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, on this subject is a "denial of the third use of the Law, i.e., the function of the Law as guide for the Christian in his life." (See Proceedings, pages 133-139)

Note: Though Resolution 3-09 and the President's Report have concluded that the third use of the Law is a theological issue in dispute among us, we do not believe that the documentation provided is in any way an adequate basis

for this conclusion. We agree that the statements and language of a few professors cited in the President's report leaves room for misunderstanding. Subsequent statements from the former faculty majority, however, clarify their position and indicate general agreement in the Synod on the third use of the Law as defined in the Formula of Concord. (Cf. Faithful I, pages 22-23. Response, pages 24-25)

IV. Further Observations

In a proper teaching and use of the third function of the Law as outlined in Article VI of the Formula of Concord, observing a few cautions may be helpful.

1. In teaching the third use of the Law we must be careful not to lose the joyous response of Christians to the evangelical exhortations in the Scriptures (the parenesis/paraklesis statements) to produce the fruits of the Spirit in our lives. Creating and maintaining an evangelical atmosphere in the church rather than a law-dominated spirit is important. II Corinthians 3:4-6; Philipians 4:4-9
2. Remembering not to use the Law as an end in itself and thereby forgetting that the Law is primarily in service to the Gospel is also important. Such misuse leads to a moralistic type of preaching and teaching - to legalism.
3. In neglecting the first and second use of the Law, making the third use of the Law its chief function (Calvanism) is the ever present danger.
4. A careless use of the third function of the Law introduces the danger of unconsciously making self-righteousness or fear the motivation for Christian living. Such motivation can lead to pride or to despair and always negates the Gospel.
5. A misinterpretation of the freedom of the Gospel may develop a tendency to neglect the proper teaching of the Law in its three functions and may result in irresponsible permissiveness and antinomianism, which also damage the Gospel proclamation.
6. Being careful not to give the impression that the Christian religion is a "do this" and "not do this" type of legalistic religion, encumbering the free man in Christ with conscience-burdening rules and regulations, is important in teaching the third use of the Law.
7. Christians should be reminded that the written Law does

not give specifics for every ethical decision challenging Christians and that we must invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance in seeking and knowing and doing the will of God in making ethical judgments. Faithful Christians in such difficult ethical situations may reach differing conclusions and need patient and sympathetic understanding from their fellow-believers, (e.g. school busing, conscientious objection to military service in modern warfare, birth control, when to withdraw artificial life-supporting help in terminal illness, placing a helpless parent or spouse in a nursing home, etc.)

V. Conclusion

In teaching the "Third Function of The Law", as in all teaching in the Synod, maintaining the Scriptural and Confessional position is important. The major concern of the Synod must be to teach the Law properly and consistently that the Law may serve the Gospel in leading sinners to repentance, in restraining the corruption that clings to man's nature even in Christian believers, and in guiding believers in their lives that they may abundantly produce the fruits of the Spirit in conformity with the immutable will of God. Pastors and teachers, under the Holy Spirit, must help equip God's people in such a way that the spontaneous submission of the new man to God's will becomes manifest in the life of the regenerate. May God grant in the faithful use of three functions of the Law and in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the congregations in the Synod a pervading joy, a contagious rejoicing in His salvation!

Third Use of the Law

ITEM 3 - CONSERVATIVE RESPONSE TO MODERATE POSITION PAPER*

Summary Statement

- I. We all agree on how the Law, the Will of God for human conduct, is to be used, we agree on its relation to our justification and to our sanctification, we agree on our motivation toward it. In all but one area we agree. We disagree on how the Law is to be known by man, what the Law commands. But if there is no agreement on what the Law is, then surely agreement on the rest is in word only.
- II. There is essentially complete agreement on conservative points 1-4 and 7-8. This means we agree on all the following statements:
 - a. We all should and do use the most frequent theological terms of this subject in the same way.
 - b. The use of the Law as guide, its third use, has only to do with sanctification, not justification.
 - c. The Christian is free in the Gospel, free from the curse and power of the Law, free in justification through Christ. The life of sanctification and its new obedience take place within this framework.
 - d. The motivation of all good works in sanctification is the power of the Gospel.
 - e. The three uses of the Law function at the same time in the Christian. That is, he is simultaneously curbed, accused and taken to account for his sinfulness, and guided in his sanctification by the self-same Law.
 - f. Whereas the curbing and accusatory functions of the Law affect all men, the function as guide to sanctification applies only to the Christian, who alone has the motivation to sanctification.
- III. Disagreement is in conservative points 5 and 6. The conflicting positions are these:
 - a. All that man may know of God's Will, the Law, is written in Scripture. The Holy Spirit teaches him the Law out of Scripture, and he is neither to add to it nor to subtract from it anything in the name of God-pleasing works.

*See Appendix 1 for Explanation of Conservative Format and
Appendix 2 for Moderate Caucus Evaluation of the Report of the ACDC.

- b. The final authority for man in knowing the Law is the indwelling Holy Spirit. Scripture does offer useful guidance in determination of the Law, but the Spirit provides a guidance beyond this by which man may be led to add to or restrict Scripture in its application to a particular ethical situation.

IV. Determination of the Law for man is an authority Scripture claims for itself and an authority affirmed by the Lutheran Confessions. Moderate and conservative reports alike leave neither question nor room for debate about this. Claim of a higher authority is a pretext for denial of this authority of Scripture and of the right use of the written Law as guide. It is an explicit refusal to accept Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions as the only certain rule and norm of Christian teaching and practice.

V. This disagreement is not between conservatives and moderates, but among the moderates themselves. Some moderates accept position (2) the position set forth in detail in conservative points 5 and 6. It is exactly the position of moderate points II-2,4, and 5. Disagreement arises only when the moderates contradict themselves by including views by others of their number, in their points II-9, 10, and IV-7 representing position (b).

Response in Detail

INTRODUCTION

We heartily agree with the Moderate introduction:

With Lutherans down through the centuries since the Reformation, "we pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated." (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, The Summary Formulation", Paragraph 3, pages 503-504)

We also continue to commit ourselves in our teaching to all the Lutheran symbols as contained in the Book of Concord, "as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God." (Constitution of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, Article II). This confessional commitment includes subscription to Article VI of the Formula of Concord which teaches explicitly both in the Epitome and in the Solid Declaration the "Third Function of The Law". These articles state clearly a proper third use of the Law for believers in their Christian living.[115]

In addition, we support the following general comments:

For some years questions have been raised in the Synod about the appropriateness of the use of the term "the third function of the Law" and the legalistic manner in which this teaching is applied at times on the parish level. [118]

In a proper teaching and use of the third function of the Law as outlined in Article VI of the Formula of Concord, observing a few cautions may be helpful.

- 1. In teaching the third use of the Law we must be careful not to lose the joyous response of Christians to the evangelical exhortations in the Scriptures (the parenesis/paraklesis statements) to produce the fruits of the Spirit in our lives. Creating and maintaining an evangelical atmosphere in the church rather than a law-dominated spirit is important. II Corinthians 3:4-6; Philippians 4:4-9*
- 2. Remembering not to use the Law as an end in itself and thereby forgetting that the Law is primarily in service to the Gospel is also important. Such misuse leads to a moralistic type of preaching and teaching - to legalism.*

3. In neglecting the first and second use of the Law, making the third use of the Law its chief function (Calvanism) is the ever present danger.
4. A careless use of the third function of the Law introduces the danger of unconsciously making self-righteousness or fear the motivation for Christian living. Such motivation can lead to pride or to despair and always negates the Gospel.
5. A misinterpretation of the freedom of the Gospel may develop a tendency to neglect the proper teaching of the Law in its three functions and may result in irresponsible permissiveness and antinomianism, which also damage the Gospel proclamation.
6. Being careful not to give the impression that the Christian religion is a "do this" and "not do this" type of legalistic religion, encumbering the free man in Christ with conscience-burdening rules and regulations, is important in teaching the third use of the Law. [119]

In teaching the "Third Function of The Law", as in all teaching in the Synod, maintaining the Scriptural and Confessional position is important. The major concern of the Synod must be to teach the Law properly and consistently that the Law may serve the Gospel in leading sinners to repentance, in restraining the corruption that clings to man's nature even in Christian believers, and in guiding believers in their lives that they may abundantly produce the fruits of the Spirit in conformity with the immutable will of God. Pastors and teachers, under the Holy Spirit, must help equip God's people in such a way that the spontaneous submission of the new man to God's will becomes manifest in the life of the regenerate. May God grant in the faithful use of three functions of the Law and in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the congregations in the Synod a pervading joy, a contagious rejoicing in His salvation! [120]

1. Definitions

The Law is the immutable will of God according to which man is to conduct himself in this life.

The first use of the Law is its use as a guide for civil authorities and government "to maintain external discipline and decency against dissolute and disobedient people."
(F.C.S.D. VI, 1) [115]

This restriction of the first use of the Law to application by civil authorities and government is not Confessional. By Confessional usage, the first use of the Law also includes discipline in the context of parental and ecclesiastical authority, for example.

The second use of the Law is "to bring people to a knowledge of their sin" (ibid) and to accuse them of it.

The third use of the Law is its use by the Holy Spirit "to instruct the regenerate out of it and to show and indicate to them in the Ten Commandments what the acceptable will of God is and in what good works, which God has prepared beforehand, they should walk." (F.C.S.D. VI, 12)

The regenerate (believers, reborn, justified) are all those who believe in the Gospel of forgiveness of sins and salvation through Christ.

Sanctification (used here and in following paragraphs in the narrow sense) is the ongoing transformation or holiness of life which follows and is a result of justification. [115]

2. Third Use and Sanctification

By contrast Colossians 1:9-14; Philippians 1:9-11; 3:12-16; I Thessalonians 4:1-12 and other passages teach that the regenerate person's sanctification in this life is not complete or perfect, but that the believer is challenged constantly to reach out for higher levels of Christian living. [116]

3. Freedom of the Gospel

The regenerate or justified Christian is "dead to the Law" and "free from the curse of the Law." (Romans 6:14-23; 7:4-6; Galatians 2:15-21; 3:10-14). Passages with such expressions emphasize the blessed state of the regenerate in being fully justified and in being delivered from the coercion, the curse, and the enslaving power of the Law, which plagues those who seek to be justified by the works of the Law. [116]

4. Motivation by the Holy Spirit

Improvement in sanctification and fruitfulness in good works on the part of the reborn are in accord with the immutable will of God comprehended in the Law. The Christian is "driven by the Spirit of Christ...These works are, strictly speaking, not works of the Law, but works and fruits of the Spirit." (F.C.S.D., VI, 17)

The Law does not motivate and empower the regenerate; only the Holy Spirit, "Who is not given and received through the Law, but through the preaching of the Gospel (Galatians 3:2-14) who renews the heart" (F.C.S.D., VI, II) (Titus 2:11-14) motivates the Christian life. [116]

5. Rule and Norm

As indicated in the Summary Statement, there is complete agreement on Moderate Point II, 2:

Article VI of the Formula of Concord teaches the proper third use of the Law for the regenerate Christian. This article contrasts the regenerate Christian with a perfectly and completely renewed Christian (paragraphs 6, 7 and again 17, 18), concluding that while a perfect Christian would need no guide, the justified regenerate Christian remains throughout life so imperfect in sanctification that he cannot rely on his own inner determination of God's will for his conduct. He daily requires the external guide and teaching of the written Law under the Holy Spirit for a God-pleasing life which is fruitful in good works. [116]

It is, however, itself contradicted by the following Moderate points:

In upholding the Law as the standard for a God-pleasing life and good works in the life of the regenerate, we must distinguish properly between the Promise and the Law so that in the Christian life Christ alone is glorified and God's grace remains grace alone. (sola gratia) "The subordinate position of the Law is clearly seen when we understand that Jesus Christ kept its demands and assumed its curse for us. His victory over the law puts the Law in its place as a vanquished servant. The Law no longer has any claim on us. Any effort to fulfill its demands in order to gain favor with God makes the Law our taskmaster and renders Christ's victory insufficient and ultimately unnecessary. The Law is useful as a servant who gives us guidance on how to live a life pleasing to God, but none of its demands, however subtle, can be made a prerequisite for receiving the Promise of Christ. We accept the Promise entirely on faith (sola fide)." (Faithful I, pages 22-23) [117]

The Law has been defined in both reports as the immutable Will of God for human conduct. If we apply this definition in the quotation here from Faithful I, we find the following: "His (scil. Christ's) victory over the Law (the eternal Will of God) puts the Law (His Will) in its proper place - as a vanquished servant;" and again, "The Law (the eternal Will of God) is useful as a servant who gives us guidance on how to live a life pleasing to God." The writers of Faithful I clearly have a position on the Law and the reverence due it which contrasts sharply from that set forth in the present moderate report.

Christians should be reminded that the written Law does not give specifics for every ethical decision challenging Christians and that we must invoke the Holy Spirit's guidance in seeking and knowing and doing the will of God in making ethical judgments. Faithful Christians in such difficult ethical situations may reach differing conclusions and need patient and sympathetic understanding from their fellow-believers, (e.g. school busing, conscientious objection to military service in modern warfare, birth control, when to withdraw artificial life-supporting help in terminal illness, placing a helpless parent or spouse in a nursing home, etc.) [119f]

We respond to this point by two quotations from the moderate report which it contradicts:

- (a) "...the justified regenerate Christian remains throughout life so imperfect in sanctification that he cannot rely on his own inner determination of God's will for his conduct." [116]
- (b) "...we pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated." [115] (Emphasis added)

The indwelling Holy Spirit uses the written Law in the life of the regenerate to instruct him in Christian living and in good works. The regenerate gratefully acknowledges this third function of the Law as divine guidance for his life. Though we affirm this proper third use of the Law as outlined in the Formula of Concord (S.D. VI), we wisely and necessarily express concern: "that the works of the Spirit of Christ not be undermined through a legalistic use of the legislation in the Bible. The Christian is led by the Spirit of Christ to be free and to face up to the criticism of the Law and move beyond that criticism to deal in love with people. The Scriptures do offer guidance in what it means to love one's neighbor as oneself, but the motivation and the final guide for the Christian in decision-making according to the Scriptures is the Spirit of Christ." Response, pages 24-25. Galatians 5:13-26. [117]

This quotation from the faculty Response (to the Blue Book) contains two serious deviations from the doctrine set forth in both the moderate and the conservative reports.

- (a) Conservative points 7 and 8 set forth the second or accusatory function of the Law as the principal function of the Law. The Christian is not led, at any time in his life, to move beyond the criticism of the Law.

Indeed, the Law always accuses and takes us to account for our sinfulness. To deny this constant accusation, or to claim that one has moved beyond it, is to deny the second use of the Law.

(b) Conservatives agree with the quoted passage from Response that the motivation for the Christian in decision-making is the Spirit of Christ. This is affirmed in our Point 4. However, in our Points 5 and 6 we reject the erroneous teaching that the Spirit of Christ functions as the final guide for Christian good works apart from the written Law. This teaching, which is specifically rejected in our point 5-ii, is contrary even to the two passages we quote from the moderate report in response to moderate Point 7 (above). It is precisely what is rejected as the Confessions write about those who "under the pretext of the Holy Spirit's guidance set up a self-elected service of God without His Word and command" (cited in conservative report, Point 5). It is the very antithesis of the third use of the Law.

While we teach that believers are to find direction for fruitful Christian living through all Scriptural admonitions, such as the Ten Commandments, the Pauline exhortations (parenesis) and other exhortatory Scriptural expressions, all of which are in accord with God's immutable will, we must also understand and teach that the Holy Scriptures contain rules, regulations, and customs not specifically abrogated but which are relevant only in the cultural situation of the people originally addressed. Such passages are not to be made binding on the consciences of Christians in other times and cultural and social situations. Example of such passages are I Corinthians 11:4-16 (as applied to hair styles and head covering for men and women); Genesis 9:3-4; Deuteronomy 12:16; 22:5; I Timothy 2:9. (Augsburg Confession XXVIII, 56) [118]

The Law cannot practically be a guide to anyone who denies the authority of Scripture, as it stands, to determine what the Law requires. To say that the Will of God is immutable means precisely that it does not change from one time or cultural situation to another. Of the Biblical passages cited, Gen. 9:3 and Deut. 12:16 are both dietary Laws, which are specifically abrogated in the New Testament (Col. 2:16; 1 Cor. 8:8). Since Deut. 22:5 forbids transvestite behavior one can only ask whether the moderates, in citing it, imply that they condone such behavior in our culture situation.

Moreover, we point out here, as elsewhere, that moderate usage of the term "binding on conscience" is not confessional. Conscience, as it is used in Scripture and the Confessions, is concerned with righteousness. A clear conscience, free of the bonds of the Law, is a gift of the Gospel. Thus, the passage from the Augsburg Confession cited by the moderate report (AC XXVIII, 56) specifically relates the binding or burdening of conscience to conditions "necessary for salvation."

6. Law and Expression of Love

(No Moderate counterpart.)

7. Simultaneity of Uses of the Law

As we stated above, the Law, both in its second and third function, is necessary for the regenerate. In connection with the third use of the Law in the life of the regenerate we need to remember that the believer is at the same time, saint and sinner (simul justus et peccator). "...The conflict between spirit and flesh continues in believers. According to the inmost self they delight in the Law of God; but the Law in their members is at war against the law of their mind. (Romans 7:23) Thus though they are never without Law, they are not under but in the Law, they live and walk in the Law of the Lord, and yet do nothing by the compulsion of the Law." (F.C.S.D. VII 18) The regenerate as sinner needs the Law to accuse and crush him (second use) and to instruct him (third use), but as saints he needs the Gospel of God's grace to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:1-16) [116f]

The phrase simul iustus et peccator is apparently applied here to sanctification, although it has always been applied in the context of justification in Lutheran usage. Thus, one is simultaneously justified and sinful in the following sense: "Though you are still far away from the perfection of the Law, still the remnants of your sin do not condemn you, because for Christ's sake we have a firm and sure reconciliation through faith, though sin still sticks to your flesh" (Ap. IV, 179). It is the freedom of the Gospel that we receive justification freely; through the grace of God, without any need placed on us.

All agree on the following point:

Lutherans, on the basis of Holy Scripture and in agreement with the Lutheran Confessions, teach that while the Law serves as the rule in the life of the regenerate, it serves at the same time in its primary function as a mirror to show him his sins and his need for repentance. [117]

8. Third Use in Believers Only

Though by definition there are three distinct uses of the Law, we should note that all three functions of the Law operate simultaneously in the regenerate through the gracious activity of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The third use does not operate in unbelievers. [116]

9. A Statement and N.O. 3-09

Resolution 3-09, 50th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, July 6-13, 1973, on the basis of the findings of the Synodical President's "Fact Finding Committee" and his

report to the Synod, charges that the stance of the former Faculty Majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, on this subject is a "denial of the third use of the Law, i.e., the function of the Law as guide for the Christian in his life." (See Proceedings, pages 133-139).

Note: Though Resolution 3-09 and the President's Report have concluded that the third use of the Law is a theological issue in dispute among us, we do not believe that the documentation provided is in any way an adequate basis for this conclusion. We agree that the statements and language of a few professors cited in the President's report leaves room for misunderstanding. Other statements from the former faculty majority, however, clarify their position and indicate that there is general agreement among us in the Synod on the third use of the Law as defined in the Formula of Concord. (cf. Faithful I, pages 22-23. Response, pages 24-25.) [118f] (Emphasis added)

Conservatives certainly do not agree that "the statements and language of a few professors interviewed cited in the President's Report (the Blue Book) leaves (sic) room for misunderstanding." The language, in fact, leaves no room for misunderstanding, the statements specifically and clearly reject the third use of the Law as it is set forth in the points of agreement of the conservative and moderate reports. The strength of the actual language is characterized by the following examples from the Report:

Prof. B. "Functionally speaking, what it (scil. the Law) does to people is the same as that of what we ordinarily call the second use of the Law, and in that way, since I can find little evidence to support in the Confessions any terminology that speaks about the third use of the Law...that is the way in which it is understood by me."

Prof. T. "If you want to call it *tertius usus* (Lat., third use), O.K. But remember, what the Law is doing there is not something unique, some third new thing, but is just fulfilling the first two functions on the guy who is a Christian...And that is what makes it difficult for me, to come back, to get back to what supposedly was a traditional *tertius usus legis* (Lat., third use of the Law) thing, to the sense that I see the New Testament saying, "There are better alternatives that you Christians have than a *tertius* use of the Law."

Furthermore, conservatives do not agree that other and subsequent statements of the former faculty majority, notably Faithful I and Response, provide reason to alter the conclusion of N. O. 3-09. Almost the entire contents of these faculty documents relevant to the third use of the Law are displayed in the moderate report, material from Faithful I in their Point II-9, that from Response in Point II-10. It is seen from the above discussion that these two references not only conflict with the conservative position, they contradict positions stated in the moderate report as well.

Finally, one cannot evaluate the moderate claim of "general agreement among us in the Synod on the third use of the Law" without addressing himself to the paper, "Is the Law a Guide for Good Works," by T. H. Rehwaldt, published as the lead article in the first issue of the new Seminex journal, Currents in Theology and Mission (Curr. Theol. Miss., 1(1), 3 (1974)) and in separate form by ELIM. This paper is a polemical criticism of the treatment of the third use of the Law by A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles. We cite the following passages from the Currents version of the paper:

"Is there a special use of the Law for the regenerated in the interest of good works?...Article VI (scil. Formula of Concord) answers, No!" (p. 7)

"References in synodical catechisms and other publications to the third use of the Law as a guide or rule book are in the tradition of Calvin rather than Luther and should be stricken." (p. 9)

One cannot seriously attempt to reconcile the Rehwaldt paper, which is currently advertised in each issue of Missouri in Perspective, with the moderate report under review.

The doctrine of the third use of the Law shows many of the problems intrinsic in the moderate theology. As the moderates agree, it is a doctrine clearly taught in both Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. But they modify this clear teaching in various ways. They misuse the term Law, even as they have defined it (cf. response to their point II, 9). They accept its authority as guide, but deny to Scripture the authority to define its contents, thereby leaving themselves with no guide (cf. response to their points II, 10 and 11). They write in their conclusion: "As in all public teaching in the Church, it is important that the Synod also maintain the Scriptural and Confessional teaching of the 'Third Function of the Law';" but they have not moved to repudiate or even cease to distribute a published paper which concludes that such teaching is "in the tradition of Calvin rather than Luther and should be stricken."

Third Use of the Law

ITEM 4 - MODERATE RESPONSE TO CONSERVATIVE POSITION PAPER

We believe the Report of the Conservative Caucus on the Third Use of the Law to be an acceptable document. We do not find any "false doctrine" therein, nor would we say that any of its statements are in serious violation of our Missouri Synod tradition. Stated positively, we would declare that, properly understood, it is in harmony with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

This is not to say that we would always express our position in the same way or that our approach and emphases would always correspond to theirs. Nor do we harbor some of the fears which seem to find expression in certain "rejections" of the Report. More will be said on this a little later on.

We do wish to stress the positive aspects of our common faith and commitment and, with this in mind, we are pleased to state that there are no disagreements among us with reference to the definitions with which the document begins. We too see the value of retaining the historic meanings of words and phrases, although we recognize that when we reach out to persons outside our communion, as we must in faithfulness to Christ's commission, we need to listen to definitions which may sound strange to us.

We fully agree with Section 2 of the Report, which limits the Third Use of the Law to the area of Sanctification. We understand that the Law has no Third Use for the unbeliever.

We likewise concur with the substance of Section 3: "The Gospel Brings Freedom." However, in view of the preeminence of this article of faith in the body of Christian doctrine, we would prefer to give it greater emphasis, even when we are speaking of the various functions of the Law. We feel somewhat uncomfortable about the immediate listing of the antitheses without reference as in the Formula of Concord (Epitome, Statement of Issue, Tappert, p. 479) to the basic and constant fact that the "flesh still inheres in them (the regenerate)" and that it is on this account that the guidance of the Law is still required. We believe, therefore, that the accusatory function of the Law needs to be in the foreground of any discussion of the subject.

We would suggest a change in the wording of the second "rejection" which states that the regenerate Christian "is free of the new obedience, the obligation to keep His Commandments." This antithesis is not altogether clear to us. It seems to define the "new obedience" as "the obligation to keep His Commandments," which is really the "old obedience." Traditionally, we have associated the "new obedience" with the work of the Spirit, as Paul speaks of it in Ephesians 4:24: "Put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

The function of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification process is stated very well in the next Section (4), and with this we fully agree, as we do also with the material in section 5.

One observation strikes us, however, as we read the quotation from Luther's Large Catechism at the close of this portion. The Reformer does indeed say that the Ten Commandments are a "summary of divine teaching on what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God," but he does not see them as a detailed blueprint for every situation or problem that may confront the Christian in his everyday living, especially in the area of interpersonal relationships. Rather, he refers to the Commandments as a "summary" and then as the "true fountain" and "true channel" from and through which good works must flow. Perhaps the best commentary on Luther's understanding of this function of the Decalogue is the manner in which he explains the Commandments in his Small Catechism. Here he goes well beyond the words of the written Law to enunciate its spirit, and at the same time he is rather open-ended in his explanations, as when he says, "and put the best construction on everything," or "help him (the neighbor) to improve and protect his property and business." Just how the Christian will show his obedience to the Law in these situations will depend on many factors and finally it will be the Spirit of Christ within him that will give him guidance.

Mindful of Luther's example, then, we believe the "rejections" in Section 5 appear too restrictive. We certainly agree with their thrust that one cannot substitute the Spirit for the Law. Behavior expressly condemned or required in Scripture remains so. However, the written Law does not spell out in every detail how it applies to all situations. Therefore, in the face of complex decisions and changing times, the Christian will frequently have to interpret how love as "the fulfilling of the Law" (Romans 13:10) should act in specific cases. In the Spirit of Christ the Christian is called upon to show what the will of God is (Romans 12:2). In this way the Christian goes beyond (but not against) what is written in the Law. And the Spirit of Christ is never "permissive," leading to immoral conduct. On the contrary, the Spirit's work in the Christian is always to the glory of God.

We were somewhat surprised by the use of the passage, "Love is the fulfilling of the Law," (Romans 13:10) in Section 6 to support the statement, "The keeping of the Commandments is the highest expression of love." We have always understood this text to mean that love is the most profound or comprehensive way of keeping the Commandments. This appears to be the only interpretation the context allows, for Paul's more complete statement reads: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law. The commandments...are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law."

We concur with what is said in Section 7 and 8. Indeed, we strongly emphasize the accusatory function of the Law and wholeheartedly support the sentence, "He (the Christian) never encounters the Law without experiencing this accusation."

It is just because of this role of the Law in the sanctified life that we prefer to stress the positive rather than the negative aspects

of the process. This, we feel, is in the tradition of St. Paul, who wrote to the Romans, "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (12:1); and to the Galatians, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law" (5:22, 23). Furthermore, the Formula of Concord never speaks of a purely informative function of the Law, but stresses that it is always accusatory. "To reprove is the real function of the Law" (Solid Declaration, VI, 14, Tappert, p. 566).

Section 9 of the Conservative Caucus Report makes reference to "A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles" and describes its treatment of the Third Use of the Law as "a concise statement of this doctrine as it is taught in Scripture and the Confessions." We have no quarrel with this, except to say that "A Statement" is perhaps too concise in treating this matter, since it merely says, "The Law, as the expression of God's immutable will, is to be used by the church to bring men to a knowledge of their sins as well as to provide Christians with instruction about good works." It does not, as the Formula of Concord is careful to do, relate the instruction of the Law to the sinful side of the regenerate. Rather, it seems to place the Second and Third Uses of the Law on the same plane. However, we would "put the best construction on everything" and say that this brief statement is to be understood in the light of what Scripture and the Confessions have to say on the subject.

By the same token, we would ask the Conservative Caucus to understand the incomplete and "off the cuff" statements in the "Blue Book" in the light of the subsequent "Faculty Response" in which all members of the "Faculty Majority" declared their full acceptance of our confessional position in this question. This, we believe, would be in demonstration of Paul's principle of love expressed in Romans 13:10 and would lead to the withdrawal of the charges regarding this matter in New Orleans Convention Resolution 3-09.

Against the background of love as the fulfilling of the Law, we believe that the minor differences between the caucuses on the Third Use are ones of emphasis rather than doctrine. We should rejoice that the Spirit of God gives His people such a variety of insights and we should profit by them all. In mutual love and respect, let us earnestly endeavor to understand and accept the Scriptural fidelity of each other.

SECTION II - PROPOSALS FOR DEALING WITH THE ISSUES

ITEM 1 - MODERATE PROPOSALS

Our committee was given two tasks: (1) delineate the issues; and (2) develop proposals for dealing with the issues in such a way that the Synod can under God achieve doctrinal consensus. In fulfillment of the second task, the members of the moderate caucus submit the following proposals:

I.

We propose that the committee papers, including these proposals for dealing with the issues, be given as broad an exposure as possible to the entire church, including (and especially) the laity.

- A. The papers, possibly in booklet form, should be made available to all delegates to Anaheim, and as soon as possible to all pastors and teachers of the Synod. For broader distribution to the laity, we recommend that the papers be made available in serial form through the Lutheran Witness, either as articles or as inserts. Competent lay-out people should be involved to make the material as readable as possible.
- B. A study guide might be considered. The study guide, if developed, should:
 - 1) lead people to determine points of unity;
 - 2) confront people with the decision as to whether the issues delineated are really doctrinal in character;
 - 3) lead them into considering the differences in the perspective of a Scriptural and Confessional understanding of the Church.

The study guide should be prepared by a "neutral" party or be the product of representatives of both the conservative and moderate approach.

- C. If necessary, private financing should be arranged. The full support of the synodical Board of Directors should be enlisted both for the dissemination and the discussion of the committee's papers.

II.

We propose that the issues as delineated be discussed throughout the Synod in groups whose size and format will encourage profitable and edifying exchange.

- A. The groups should be assembled as much as possible at the grass-roots level (circuits are probably the most logical units). Provision should be made for the participation of pastors, teachers and lay people.
- B. The goal of such groups must be clearly seen as achieving consensus. Differences are not to be glossed over or played down (we assume our papers have contributed toward making the differences clear), but in dealing with them members of the group must have as their goal reaching out to each other for understanding and healing.
- C. Suggestions should be made to those responsible for the discussions to insure as much as possible that they be held in a context of devotion and prayer for the blessing of God's Spirit, and in mutual respect on the part of the participants.

III.

We propose that a climate be created in which discussion can be carried on in an edifying way. Neither of the first two proposals will be useful without the implementation of this third proposal.

- A. From our perspective, some of the things which have helped to create an unfavorable climate for mutual trust and profitable discussion are:
 - 1) Resolutions at conventions which say, implicitly or explicitly, that given doctrinal formulations passed by majority vote should be made binding on the members of the Synod. Specifically, at New Orleans, this would include the combination of 2-12 and 3-01. These resolutions are now being implemented in such a way as to impugn the loyalty to both the Scriptures and the Synod of those who dissent. Where such loyalty is questioned, fraternal discussion becomes impossible.
 - 2) A refusal to recognize the validity of the ministry within our Synod of the teachers, graduates and students of Seminex. The people at Seminex believe they are fulfilling their calling as Lutherans committed to Scripture and the Confessions and as members of the Missouri Synod committed to its constitution. The establishment of Seminex came principally in response to the treatment of faculty members suspected or accused of false teaching on the basis of standards established by convention vote. These are the very standards our committee has been discussing for over a year, and which the entire church needs to examine in the light of Scripture. If this process is to have any integrity, the ministries of the faculty and students

of Seminex must be affirmed as valid in the Synod while it is carried out.

- 3) The dismissal of John Tietjen on grounds of false teaching. We mention his case specifically because it has been the most publicized, but he stands as the symbol of others as well who have been terminated either partly or exclusively for doctrinal reasons, on the synodical, district and congregational level. If people are removed from their ministries on doctrinal grounds even while these grounds are being discussed as to their validity, it is difficult for people to take the discussions seriously.

B. A climate conducive to profitable discussion would be one in which:

- 1) We recognize that by God's grace we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and we seek not to accuse, but to edify one another.
- 2) We recognize our fallibility in judgment and actions, and our need to repent and seek the forgiveness of God and one another.
- 3) We recognize that there are not "two sides" in this controversy, but that we are a body of people with various understandings and varying emphases on the points at controversy.
- 4) Both those who agree and those who disagree with the opinions on doctrinal matters passed by a delegate majority at a synodical convention are to be considered loyal to the Scriptures and to the Synod until such time as a patient, loving and fraternal ministry of discipline has been pursued. Basic to this process of ministry must be the constitutional principle that "all matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God."
- 5) There is a balanced presentation of all views in the official synodical publications, thereby eventually rendering all partisan publications unnecessary. This would include full disclosure of charges and reasons for dismissal of synodical faculty and staff members.
- 6) The Synod's processes of adjudication and appeal are implemented in such a way as to insure the carrying out of #8 in the list of objects of the Synod: "The protection of pastors, teachers and congregations in the performance of their duties and the maintenance of their rights." This would include prevention of a member of the Synod from being subjected to double or even triple jeopardy.
- 7) We rejoice in our unity with regard to all the articles of faith included in our historic Lutheran confessions, and with regard to the questions which in the past have divided Christians

(e.g. the person and work of Christ, the Lord's Supper, and the like). It is our sincere conviction, after our discussions on this committee, that our differences are not the kind that should divide us, but are largely differences of emphasis which can serve a constructive purpose if we utilize them to serve one another rather than attack one another.

ITEM 2 - CONSERVATIVE PROPOSALS

We write this letter to accompany the report of the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation, suggesting respectfully a distribution and use by the church of the committee work. The report itself, consisting of four pairs each of discussion and response, is addressed to the first of the two tasks assigned by you to the committee in your letter of appointment to the committee members of January 24, 1974, i.e., delineation of issues. Our proposal for use, given here, is concerned with the other assigned task, "to develop proposals for dealing with the issues in such a way that the Synod can under God and by His grace achieve doctrinal consensus." The committee determined by unanimous vote in its final plenary session of April 7, 1975, that each caucus, conservative and moderate, should submit a letter with the report to this purpose.

We propose, first, that the committee report of 16 documents which we now submit be taken in itself as characterization of the principal theological issues at the center of our synodical strife. The documents do have weaknesses that could be repaired with further study and by other minds. In all candor, we must admit, moreover, that we do not consider the moderate reports to encompass the spectrum of doctrine represented by moderates in Synod. Indeed, we can readily cite major examples in the official media of ELIM and Seminex of views far from those presented here which have been published during our deliberations. Our suggestion of acceptance of this report is made notwithstanding all these facts. For the report is unique among documents presenting the moderate positions. Unlike Faithful I, for example, it does speak to many of the issues, however mildly; and unlike the Blue Book, it is a source which moderates could hardly impugn. Most importantly, the report does display the central points at issue in the Synod.

Thus, we believe that these reports do show the emergence of two distinct theologies in Synod. One simply cannot replace inerrancy of Scripture with a notion that Scripture "says what God intends it to say and accomplishes what He intends it to accomplish," without any other tie to actual events and happenings, and not yield tremendously on the meaning of real, human history as divine revelation. One cannot abandon the plain, literal sense of the text for any and all interpretations consistent with the ill-defined presuppositions and methods of post-World War I historical criticism and still consider himself to have any sure norm of doctrine and practice at all in the original sense. The theologies of the conservative and moderate reports are different, as they must be, given these differences. Moreover we feel that the reports do demonstrate that theologies which differ in these basic properties must disagree throughout in doctrine and in its articles. It is evident from the report that these differences in fact do manifest themselves in each area treated.

We note in making our recommendations for distribution and use of the report by the church that we do not yet have the full report before us at this time. During a special meeting of the committee on June 26, the moderate caucus, in the context of a hostage report and contrary to previous, unanimously adopted agreements of the committee, moved to require that the committee encumber its final report with the stipulation that its distribution to the church would necessarily include an additional statement by

the Moderate caucus on the format of the Conservative responses. The Conservative caucus does, of course, recognize it to be a corollary of our advisory role that the committee not present you with an encumbered report. In any case, the recommendations below for circulation of the report itself outside of duly constituted agencies, such as the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, is based on the assumption that the added statements would not tend to be divisive or to compromise the authority of the report itself for the general reader.

Granted that the committee report be acceptable as a characterization of the issues, as we propose, we then suggest to you that it be used by the church as the basis of a three-stage process of information, evaluation, and forward action. In the information state, the 16 committee reports, bound together, would be distributed widely and prominently throughout the church under the signature of her president. The reports would be bound without modification or editing in order to preserve the strict neutrality of the document already inherent in your initial appointment of seven moderates and seven conservatives of equivalent status to comprise the committee. We do feel that the requirement for neutrality far outweighs the disadvantages of unevenness, technical language, and the like which the unedited document will surely contain. The second stage, evaluation, could proceed immediately upon distribution of the report. It could be conducted at any level in the church and especially at the level of pastors' and teachers' conferences. In any case, and this we suggest explicitly, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations would receive the report for its formal evaluation. Acting within its constituted responsibilities, especially with regard to the fostering and preserving of the unity of the faith, the Commission would evaluate the delineation of doctrinal differences presented in the report in order to determine areas in which consensus does already obtain as well as those in which there is indication of intolerable disagreement. This Commission would also necessarily be involved in the third stage of our proposal, that of forward action. In this stage, the results of the evaluation would be incorporated into the church's ongoing search for consensus. The report represents an unbiased organization of a vast body of primary material bearing directly on our synodical issues. We would certainly expect its incorporation to contribute substantially both to clarification of the divisive nature of our differences and to their true gravity.

We find it necessary to clarify even what we mean by consensus. This caucus considers consensus to be "mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles." (FC Ep X, 7) We consider such consensus a goal clearly required of the church by Scripture (I Tim. 6:4) and the only right basis for God-pleasing concord in the church (FC SD, Summ.). In contrast, the moderate report on Gospel and Scripture expressly restricts need for consensus to Gospel in its narrow sense.

Moreover, in areas in which differences are very clear indeed, the moderate concept of doctrine itself obscures these differences. Thus, one finds the following conclusion in the moderate report on Inspiration and Inerrancy:

"The differences that exist in connection with the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture are not doctrinal and should not be divisive of fellowship."

Particularly in view of disagreement of this kind, we expect that it will be essential in this third stage for the church to define its approach to consensus in terms of the issues we have delineated.

In conclusion, let us emphasize that the merit and feasibility of any proposals from this committee for use of its work depend on many factors the committee, as an advisory group, was not competent to consider. We do feel that the reports themselves delineate the issues. We are convinced that it would require a project of much greater scope to improve substantially on their content to this purpose. It is in this spirit that we submit these proposals as well as the report itself. For the same reason, however, we have not spoken to the timing of our three-stage proposal.

Although it is perhaps regrettable that the committee was unable to complete its report and recommendations in time for the synodical convention at Anaheim, we do not feel the urgency others have suggested to be associated with this report. Obviously the report does not have normative authority in any case. It is not applicable as a characterization of the teaching of any individual or particular group, since no one has claimed it as such. It certainly cannot find application as a guide by which to judge such teaching, beyond that of focusing on controverted articles, since this authority is always reserved alone for Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. It is therefore independent of questions of such synodical resolutions as New Orleans 3-01 or 3-09. It has no other bearing on any cases charging false doctrine to individuals for the same reason. Thus, its sole potential value lies in the very purpose to which it is addressed, namely, the delineation of the theological issues which confront us. Since it is the lack of consensus, and not the searching for it, that is the source of the strife and dissension which are our agony, we feel that the report may with the help of God be very useful to this purpose.

Respectfully submitted, in His Name,

Conservative Caucus, Advisory Committee
on Doctrine and Conciliation

Karl L. Barth
William T. Eggers
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APPENDIX 1

Format of Conservative Caucus Responses to Moderate Reports

We describe at the outset our choice of format for responses to the four reports of the Moderate caucus. Each response is seen to consist of material interspersed with *script-type* text with indented margins. The *script-type* material is quoted directly from the Moderate report. The regular text contains the Conservative response to the report in that section. The entire Moderate report is reproduced in the *script-type* text. However, the material from the Moderate report is not given in its original order. Rather, the section headings for the Conservative reports are listed, and all Moderate passages dealing with a given heading are brought together under that heading (with the exception of the response on the historical-critical method: see below). Thus, for example, the Conservative report on Gospel and Scripture consists of an Introduction and seven sections. Moderate statements dealing with the first subject, definition of the word Gospel, are arranged under that heading, those with the second, Gospel in its broad sense, under that heading, and so forth. Following this format description we have appended a list of the section headings of all four responses. It is noted that these titles are not displayed in the Conservative reports, although the numbering is that of the reports and the contents of each section summarized by the heading.

This format makes possible immediate comparison of the original Conservative and Moderate reports. In each section, one has, respectively, the Conservative statement of position on that subject, the Moderate position, and the Conservative response to the Moderate position. We emphasize that great care was taken in the rearrangement of material not to distort the Moderate position. In each instance, sections were kept of sufficient length to assure that the original sense of the statement is evident. Obviously, however, we rely on the fact that the complete Moderate report is presented in this same volume, so that the reader can (and should) refer to that report for the original flow of material.

The format for response on the historical-critical method differs from that of the other areas because of the nature of the material. Its format agrees in that it brings together and discusses the Moderate material under topical headings. These headings do not, however, correspond to division of material in the Conservative report.

The Conservative report is not intended to be an orderly discussion of the historical-critical method. Conservatives reject application of this method to Scripture both for its structure of assumptions about Scripture and for any of the interpretive conclusions it has yielded. After 15 months of discussions, including a written analysis of such problems, the Conservative caucus found itself still unable to obtain from the Moderate caucus a cogent statement of the distinctions between the method as it is practiced inside and outside The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Its report therefore could not do more than list a series of theses and antitheses regarding points the caucus found to be its properties wherever it is practiced.

The headings of the response format are selected to approach three questions in turn, questions which are directly raised by the concluding statement of the Moderate report: "How can we best minister to all of Christendom in theological scholarship -- by rejection of the generally accepted method of Historical Criticism? or by showing through responsible Biblical scholarship how this method can be useful for those who employ it with adequate Christian presuppositions and controls?" (emphasis added) These questions are:

- (1) what is this method as it is generally accepted (and therefore defined)?
- (2) are the listed presuppositions and controls to be added adequate (or even themselves acceptable)? and
- (3) does application of the method as defined and limited in fact imply a new understanding of the authority and nature of Scripture?

Practically, comparison of the Conservative and Moderate reports would hardly be possible without a format such as we have selected. They present two theologies, differing alike in their basic beliefs about Scripture and in the way they relate the articles of doctrine to one another. It is to be expected that the natural order of presentation would be different for the two. Moreover, the committee decision that caucuses work independently in preparation of the final papers itself led to differences in order of presentation, although such differences would not be as difficult to unravel. In comparing the two sets of reports, a theologian would himself mentally rearrange the points into a common order of presentation by subject. We provide this format to facilitate such a comparison by the church generally.

Contents of Conservative Reports and Responses

I. Inspiration and Inerrancy

A. INSPIRATION

1. Definition
2. Normative Authority
3. Accommodation
4. Mechanism
5. Uniqueness
6. Mindset of Faith

B. INERRANCY

1. Affirmation
2. Inerrancy: A Doctrine Explicitly Taught In Scripture
3. Definition
4. Qualifications

5. Consequences of weakening
6. Obfuscations (Response only)
7. Implications for Fellowship (Response only)

C. CONCLUSION

II. Gospel and Scripture

Introduction

1. Definition of the Word, Gospel
2. Gospel in its Broad Sense
3. Centrality of the Gospel
4. Scripture
5. Biblical Authority and Doctrinal Differences
6. Interpretation (Gospel Reductionism)
7. Total Authority of Scripture
8. Unity of the Church (Response only)

III. Historical - Critical Method

1. Definition
2. Presuppositions
 - a. Methodological Presuppositions
 - b. Doctrinal Presuppositions
 - c. Theological Presuppositions
3. Controls
4. Authority and Nature of Scripture

IV. Third Use of the Law

Introduction (Response only)

1. Definitions
2. Third Use and Sanctification
3. Freedom of the Gospel
4. Motivation by the Holy Spirit
5. Rule and Norm
6. Law and Expression of Love
7. Simultaneity of Uses of the Law
8. Third Use in Believers Only
9. A Statement and New Orleans Resolution 3-09

APPENDIX 2

MODERATE CAUCUS EVALUATION OF THE REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DOCTRINE AND CONCILIATION

When President Preus appointed this committee, we of the so-called "moderate caucus" had varied reactions. Some felt that the appointment of a bi-partisan committee to delineate the issues troubling the Synod had come too late because decisive action had already been taken at New Orleans and in subsequent administrative decisions to determine the doctrinal position of Synod, to label the teaching of the "faculty majority" as false doctrine, and to curtail the ministries of a significant number in Synod. In view of this, some of us also felt that support of this advisory committee would give the church the false impression that honest efforts were being made to seek understanding and reconciliation when, in fact, the seeds of schism had already been planted by these previous actions. Nonetheless, in the hope that this committee's efforts could somehow serve the cause of reconciliation, we set our reservations aside and devoted ourselves to the appointed task.

The one thing that gave us hope was that the committee was balanced in its representation of various views. We felt strongly that much of our synodical problem was due to the fact that vital committees appointed by the President previously had not been balanced: e.g. The Fact Finding Committee and the New Orleans floor committees.

A balanced committee held out promise for clarifying the issues in such a way that "both sides" would have their position stated fairly, and not be the victims of misrepresentation. The instructions to our committee stated this as a goal. We were to delineate the issues, and publish no statement unless all were agreed on the issues and their wording. In President Preus' oral instructions, he said that we should work toward being able to state the "other side's" position in a way acceptable to them.

Our committee's goal was to complete its work in time for concrete proposals to be made to the 1975 convention.

Our committee has failed in its task, and we believe this must be reported to the Synod. We want the Synod also to know our views on why we failed.

First, how did we fail? We failed

- (1) in not providing any input for a convention which has now reiterated crucial decisions on the very doctrinal issues we were trying to delineate. And we failed
- (2) in our task of stating the issues in a way that both sides agreed was accurate and fair.

1) January 1 was set as our deadline. We could not meet that date, but set a new deadline for ourselves for April 8, recognizing that anything later would render virtually impossible any input to Anaheim. By April 8, though all the "moderate" papers were completed, none of the "conservative" response papers was completed. We agreed to a new deadline of May 8. This deadline passed also, and the papers were finally turned in the third week in June.

The conservative brethren unquestionably regret this delay also, and have so expressed themselves. The fact remains that the delay has frustrated the purpose of the committee in providing concrete proposals for Anaheim. We are forced to wonder how seriously the committee's contribution to Anaheim was envisioned from the beginning.

2) Even more significantly, our committee failed in its attempt to delineate the issues in a way acceptable to all. We have produced separate documents on each of four issues, and a separate response to each document in turn. Thus instead of four documents, we have sixteen. That number alone tells the story.

We finally agreed on this procedure in our committee when we disagreed repeatedly with each other on our statements describing one another's position. We finally said, "Each side will have to state its own position for itself." We also agreed that each side should then have an opportunity to respond to the position paper of the other group.

The response papers in particular show that we have failed miserably in avoiding distortion and caricature. The conservative caucus will have to state its own views in this matter, but we express very strong objection to the procedure of their caucus in rearranging parts of our papers as they comment on them because the rearrangement presents a false picture by obscuring the logical development of the paper. We believe the conservative group has also misunderstood and grossly distorted some of our statements. We are accused of false teaching, and the accusation is once again based on serious misrepresentation of our position. A good example of this is that, despite our repeated explanations and in the absence of evidence, the conservative response document on the historical critical method continues to give the impression that we hold certain presuppositions of historical critical study which we do not hold at all. Beyond this, it makes the outrageous suggestion that our approach to Scripture places the doctrine of the two natures of Jesus Christ in jeopardy.

In short, the conservative group saw as its goal to make clear what they believed to be the disunity in Synod. The moderate group saw as its goal to make clear what they believed to be our unity. We worked at cross purposes.

Thus the entire purpose for which the committee was appointed has been frustrated. The same distortions are repeated. The practical result of this is that those committees and boards who have the responsibility and power to deal with teachers and pastors in our Synod will define the

issues in their own way, utilizing if they choose the same distortions that have been employed in the past.

The real problem is that for all practical purposes the doctrinal issues have already been decided by convention action, even though they have not yet been properly delineated. Discussions designed to "delineate issues" are doomed to failure before they start in such a situation. Successful discussion is absolutely impossible in 'committees of conciliation' when, while the discussions are in progress, out in the field ministries are being terminated by responsible synodical officials on the basis of the very issues under discussion.

Our experience on this committee convinces us that fraternal discussions of doctrine can and ought to occur. However, they will be fruitful only if done, to use a much maligned phrase, in an atmosphere of openness and trust. This means openness to what one another is attempting to say, even when language and concepts appear to depart from tradition, because there is an abiding trust that all involved are Christ's people seeking the truth. If the Synod, however, merely "disciplines" those who dissent or who support people whose ministries have been unjustly curtailed, it will destroy itself.